TWO GIRLS AND TWO TREASURES

AGNES MILLER

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TWO GIRLS
AND
TWO TREASURES

"LUCILLE DOUGLAS, WAKE UP YOURSELF!"—*Page 17.*

TWO GIRLS
AND
TWO TREASURES

By

AGNES MILLER

Author of "The Chimes of Daskam High"

ILLUSTRATED BY

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BOSTON

LOTHROP, LEE & SHEPARD CO.

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Two Girls and Two Treasures

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Two Girls and Two Treasures

CHAPTER I

ENCHANTED GROUND

"WHY, here's Captain Jim!"

"Good-morning, Captain! Did you see the parade up on the green?"

"Yes, Lucille. But I didn't think much of it this year, so I come on down here with the other boys and girls, knowing I'd draw something fust-rate this time, sure!"

"What a flatterer!" laughed the first speaker.

She was a tall, bright-eyed, energetic girl of fourteen, with wiry black hair and bony elbows. She wore a gay blue frock in the newest summer style, and a glittering string of glass beads to match.

"Captain Jim's just fishing!" she declared.

"But that's his business, Ethel," cried the girl whom the captain had called Lucille.

Of the same age as Ethel Merriam, in other respects she was a contrast to her companion, with her delicate color, large, grave, hazel eyes, and soft, tawny hair. Her pretty mauve dress hinted, like Ethel's, at a holiday; but the two girls had joined the old sea-captain whom everybody in the little town of Carleton knew as "Captain Jim," at the gate of the schoolhouse.

"Well, I thought I was letting my business go this morning, like everybody else in Carleton," protested the captain. He nodded his white head toward the town, which lay on the shores of Hallett Bay, the blue harbor that stretched before the schoolhouse gate. "Everybody's celebrating,—except you two girls, seems like. Why ain't you inside the schoolhouse here, making a racket like all the other young folks in town, if my hearing's still good?"

"We must wait for Miss Page. She told us to meet her here. We're to help her specially, with the Memorial Day exercises," explained Lucille with a pretty touch of responsibility.

"She knows how to pick helpers, I'll say," observed the captain mischievously.

"There he goes again, Lucille!" cried Ethel. "Captain Jim's fishing, fishing, until he gets a compliment, too!"

"Think I'd do that at my age?" The captain was truly shocked.

"Oh, then you want the truth," retorted Lucille. "Well, they say it always has to come out, so here it is: You're as young as we are, Captain Jim, and you always were!"

"Handsome, that is! The best I can hand back to you is, that both of you used to be lots younger than you are now," returned the captain with prompt and acceptable gallantry. "Don't try to deny it,—I knew you when you were. Haven't forgotten who taught you to fish off the docks all of six or seven years ago, have you?"

"Hardly!" cried Ethel; "nor who fished *me* out that day I fell overboard ——"

"Nor who saved me from being towed out to sea by a flounder just my size!" broke in Lucille.

"Preserved you both for great careers, I did," declared Captain Jim complacently and confidently. "Might need you, some day!"

Ethel giggled delightedly; but Lucille, fixing her clear hazel eyes on the captain steadfastly, took the half-jesting remark with a seriousness that might have disconcerted a less wise and experienced person.

"Do you really mean that, Captain Jim? Do you think we could do something—well—wonderful—*here,* did you mean? You didn't mean here, in Carleton, did you?"

Her voice was eager, but it trailed off with the tiniest sigh. Ethel frowned faintly. Why was Lucille getting one of her whimsical fancies at this most inappropriate moment? But before she could point out with her own good practical sense that Captain

Jim had made a joke, the captain, following the gaze of the clear hazel eyes that had left his face to travel restlessly around the curve of blue water, returned very quickly and kindly: "Why not here? What's prettier than that picture of this home town of ours, I want to know? And I ought to know; I've been enough places."

Both girls had to smile in agreement, for Captain Jim Higgins was certainly the most traveled citizen of Carleton. It was only a few years since he had retired from his long command of a coastwise freighter on the Atlantic seaboard, and he was still active as a local fisherman, for he was a strong, hearty old man, full of energy and interest in life. To go fishing with Captain Jim, and listen to his famous stories, was a prized treat; and his favored friends had numerous chances to hear his adventures, for any day his motorboat might be seen coming into Hallett Bay with a load of cod or haddock for the big Carleton fish-packing plant which loomed up in the foreground of the scene from the

school gate. Consequently Lucille hesitated to differ even reluctantly with such an authority; but in a minute she said shyly: "Carleton is ever so pretty, and I love it. But do you know, sometimes when I look at it this way, I have such a curious feeling about it,—almost as if it wasn't real ——"

"No? Then where've you been ever since you were born?" inquired Ethel.

Lucille patted her friend's arm indulgently, but insisted on her point. "I mean, sometimes it looks so sound asleep—or would 'spellbound' be a better word? And I wonder if anything could ever happen here—or if I could do anything wonderful here. There! Don't you see what I mean?"

A cloud traveling across the bright May sky had just at that moment cast a shadow over the little town, while out in Hallett Bay, and over the surrounding country, the deep-blue sea and springtime fields showed their brightest tints in the sunshine. In the faint shadow all the details of the crescent shore stood out clearly. The town looked

almost singularly peaceful. To the right it stretched across a fine beach; to the left, half-way up a low range of hills. Most of the houses were white, a few yellow or gray, and, with their silvery-shingled roofs, they made a charming picture in a charming setting, the blue harbor where the founders of Carleton had come to anchor two centuries before.

The houses on the hillside were the largest and most substantial. The beach showed straggling rows of small cottages, and was prolonged into a green headland that extended far out into the sea, and bore the name of Battery Cape. The cape itself was bare of houses; but along the dunes beyond it were numerous pretty, unpretentious homes, set in pleasant gardens. A winding white road came from the cape past the schoolhouse gate, continued past Carleton Green, a small triangle of lawn surrounded by old elms, and took its way up the hillside. Facing the green stood the gray stone town hall, with its tall bell-tower, which,

with the exception of a church spire or two, was the only structure that rose above the low skyline of the town. The sole evidence of much industry anywhere was that dark pile of the fish-packing plant. This gave occupation to many Carleton folk, especially those from the many new families which, in recent years, had come from neighboring parts of the country,—in some cases, from other countries,—to settle in the old, conservative town that thus afforded them a livelihood.

Off on the wooded hills a cleared field here and there showed the faint yellow or green of young grain, or, in some meadows, a herd of cattle might be seen settling to their noonday rest. The whole scene was in repose. There was not a sail in the harbor; not a toot of motor-boat or automobile was to be heard; the small craft at the docks were securely tied to their moorings. Indeed, Lucille had described Carleton quite accurately; it had at the moment the air of a town held fast in an enchanter's spell,

where nothing could happen, or young energy find any outlet.

But the cloud traveled onward; and as the silvery roofs again reflected the sunshine, and a sharp little salt breeze blew up from the rippling waves off the cape, Ethel nipped her friend deftly on the arm with a firm thumb and finger.

"Lucille Douglas, wake up yourself! You're in a trance. Are you dreaming about the cur-r-rse of Carleton, or what?"

Lucille returned to earth with a giggle, which, however, suddenly stopped.

"There ain't any curse!" cried Captain Jim stoutly, and, for him, severely. Ethel gaped at him, for now it was he who had taken a joke seriously. Seeing her amazement, he added more mildly: "No, there ain't any; not while the head, hand, and heart rule together, I'll tell the world!"

"There can't be, then, if Captain Jim says so with his favorite pledge," cried Ethel, recovering her lively spirits on the rebound. "Lucille, if you'd been nearer

than a thousand miles off, these last two minutes, you'd have seen who was coming up the road. There's work waiting for you!"

"Well, I'm all ready for it ——"

"And I'm always ready for it!" rejoined Ethel.

"Correct, both!" laughed a new voice; and the trio at the gate turned to greet a slim, girlish person just arriving, whose bright, red-gold hair, peeping from beneath a dainty little green hat, caught a sunbeam and held it.

"Oh, Miss Page!" cried the two girls in one breath. "What must we do first to help you?"

"Well," replied Miss Page, appearing to reflect deeply as she felt in a green-leather hand-bag, "I hear sounds in the building which seem to hint that boys—and also girls—have arrived. Therefore, Ethel, will you please take this key, and go in and open my locker? You'll find the tricolor ribbons there. Then, will you please look up the

boys whose names are marked on the ribbons, and give each his? And, Lucille! Will you please get the wreaths from the principal's office—tell Mr. Lowrie I asked you to take them,—and distribute them to the girls on this list?"

With key and slip of paper in hand, the two girls sped off up the walk to the picturesque, old-fashioned schoolhouse, with its clock-tower and yellow wooden-pillared porch. Ethel vigorously shooed off an enterprising lad who suddenly appeared from nowhere, and was eager to bear a hand in the difficult task of opening the locker; Lucille shook her head at a pretty, light-haired girl who leaned out of the second-story front window, and shrieked a request to come right up and hear about the party. Both were so intensely in earnest about the business in which they were taking an active part, as they usually did in all school affairs, that the captain laughed indulgently as the door banged behind them.

"They're the same sort I knew here forty

years ago and more," he declared. "And how's things with you, Helen?"

For Helen Page had lingered to exchange a word or two with the old man who had always been as good a friend to her as he was to all the younger Carleton folk. She was a Carleton girl, herself; only a few years ago, she had been a pupil in this very school. And though at that time the captain had usually been off on long voyages, while, later, she herself had been away at college, she had never forgotten Captain Jim.

Prefacing her answer with the statement that the principal had said she needn't come to school too early to-day, as he would be there himself with other helpers, and she had worked hard on the program, she replied with rather determined cheerfulness: "Things are going pretty well, I think. You mean, of course, for our exercises? Yes, we got quite a response to our plan to decorate the memorial trees here in the schoolyard to-day."

"Yours, wasn't it? I guessed that, you're

so fond of entertainments. Well, it's a fust-rate one, I'll say," declared Captain Jim, cordially.

"Do you really think so?" There was the faintest twinkle of mischief in Miss Page's eye. "It was *new* ——"

She tantalizingly left the sentence unfinished; the captain made a noise much resembling a grunt.

"Anything that'll liven us up some, I'm for," he announced. "Such a poor parade as we had this morning, I never see; very few in it, 'most everybody out of step, and Judge Trenholm taking mighty little trouble with his speech, seemed to me. But just the same, Helen, that speech made me think of Ben ——"

Miss Page nodded sympathetically, and looked at the old man rather eagerly.

"Mainly, I suppose, because it just reminded me again of what I always think of specially on this day,—that I got him back from the war. Not," reluctantly qualified Captain Jim, "that he's exactly back, one

way. But there! How could he be radio operator on a liner, and live in Carleton, too?"

Miss Page nodded gently, but did not speak.

"And I says to myself," finished the captain, "I says: 'Well, I'm sorry he spoke that way, so hasty; he'll be bound by his word. Yet sometimes I can't blame him too much.'"

"Other people were hasty, too," murmured Miss Page.

The captain sighed.

"Well," he said, in a moment, "I do believe Judge Trenholm meant well, and of course he'd known Ben all his life, but he wasn't just to say smooth ——"

"And certainly you were the one to be disappointed, if anybody was," broke in Miss Page, with the severe air of one who recommends that other people mind their own business. "Why, you did everything to help Ben, not hinder him."

"People must do what they're suited to

do," declared the captain, stoutly. "Ben always was scientific and right up to the minute; he was always set on doing his own job fust-rate, but not quite so good at overseeing other chaps. Why should he do just what I did forty years ago? Shucks, the nonsense some folks has got in their heads!"

"I hope he'll never forget what you did for him!"

"He'd be scared stiff if he heard you speak so fierce, Helen, long as he's known you, and brave boy as he is!" teased Captain Jim. Miss Page smiled herself at the unconsciously admonitory teacher's tone in which she had so soberly spoken. "Well, he's not forgot me yet, anyhow. No, he writes his old granddad regularly,—day after to-morrow my letter will come, on the first of the month. And believe me, Ben hasn't forgotten the rest of Carleton, either. If he gets a chance to keep his word about coming back, that boy of mine will come!"

Miss Page did not look so confident as her old friend. In fact, she raised her eye-

brows doubtfully, and returned Captain Jim's gentle, steady gaze as if she only wished she could agree with him. But the fact was that, as she recalled the trouble there had been in the little town about Ben Porter, the lively young grandson whom the captain, late in life, had been called on to bring up, she almost gave a shiver of despair. She remembered it well; she had been home from college on a vacation, at the time. Ben had been one of her older playmates until he left Carleton, at a very early age, to serve in the navy during the war. He had liked sea life, and after the war had entered the merchant service, making occasional happy flying trips home. At first, all Carleton had watched his career with the greatest interest; many a son of the town had become a sea-captain, and, especially with one for a grandfather, Ben was expected confidently to follow tradition. And then he had decided to become a radio man!

Recollecting the sensation this decision had caused, Miss Page found her shiver

momentarily broken up by a painful little giggle. How absurd people had been over what was, to Carleton, a new idea! Those few years ago, to many persons in that conservative little place, radio was still quite experimental, and,—an important point,—nobody from Carleton had previously become an operator.

Ben's choice of a profession, in fact, was criticized too freely for his taste. Miss Page remembered well some of the discouraging remarks he had repeated to her, remembered how she had tried in vain to persuade him to make light of them. And it had been Judge Trenholm, Carleton's leading citizen and chairman of the town council, who had brought things to a head; for he, one day in public, had reproached Ben not only with being new-fangled, but ungrateful, besides, —ungrateful to a grandfather to whom Ben was known to be devoted!

As Ben could not see that it was exactly a crime to be new-fangled; as his grandfather had encouraged him to follow his own

bent; and as the judge was, to tell the truth, rather disagreeable and officious, as one of his age and position might have a tendency to be, Ben had not been able to make much allowance for him. Had he not been so young, he might have remembered that Judge Trenholm was never quick to like anything new; that he did not care for young people, filled, as they were,—said the judge,—with conceit and absurd ideas; and that the poor old gentleman had lost his only son in the war. All Ben saw, at the moment, was the fact that he was unjustly reproached. He had ferociously flung off from the judge with the promise, now famous in Carleton: "I'm going; I'll come back. Yes, I'll come back—when this old dump of a town comes back!"

Miss Page ended her recollections with a sigh. She felt sure Ben had safely cut himself off forever from the little town where life ran on still with such monotony, with so little of the progress he himself typified. Then a new idea struck her. She suggested

hopefully: "Our Carleton anniversary celebration ought to get under way next week, oughtn't it, Captain Jim? That is, if the town council vote to hold one, when they meet Tuesday."

"Oh, they will," replied the captain, confidently. "We've been going along here two hundred years—we'll have to celebrate. Folks have been talking about it all spring."

"Yes, a good celebration ought to be very popular, and should unite the whole town," said Miss Page, enthusiastically. "O dear me, Captain Jim, look at that clock on the schoolhouse tower! It's twenty minutes of twelve, and the procession starts in five minutes, while I stand chattering here! Well, I'll see you when we march out —— *Oh!* What's that?"

For suddenly, out from the schoolhouse floated a loud buzz of voices, then came a roar—a fall—excited shrieks. Lucille Douglas shot into view at the second-floor front window, and beckoned Miss Page violently, just as the latter, with Carleton, captain,

and old memories all forgotten, sprang through the gate, and, trembling with apprehension, dashed up the path to the schoolhouse door.

CHAPTER II

REPRESENTATIVE PEOPLE

When, a few minutes before, Lucille and Ethel had entered the high-school room on the second floor, the scene had been a buzz of talk, as the girls and boys crowded there awaited the signal for the procession to start.

The older students were grouped near the window. Conspicuous among them was the pretty, fair-haired girl who had called down so insistently to Lucille. She had a bright and clever face, marred by a somewhat spoiled and intolerant expression. Her name was Alison Fielding; she was Number One in next month's graduating class, though its youngest member. The only child of one of the principal families in Carleton, with an indulgent, public-spirited mother whom she was always quoting, Alison had excellent opportunities, which she

had improved, to become a social leader among her schoolmates.

She was very particular about her own circle; those around her included all the choice spirits of the upper classes, according to Alison's definition of "choice." Among the younger girls, she much approved of Lucille, a neighbor of her own up on the hill. The Douglas family had long been esteemed in Carleton, where Lucille's father was owner of the *News,* a paper of more than local reputation. Alison's special friend, however, was one of her classmates named Mary Townsend, who was now standing with her arm linked in the other girl's.

Mary was quiet, smiling, smooth-haired, smooth-mannered. She was never known to exaggerate, to get irritated, to show annoyance; and she always gave the impression of having thought carefully before she spoke.

The rest of Alison's circle, girls and boys perched on the desks near the window and chattering together, made up a rather clan-

nish company, which represented the more conservative element in Carleton life. They were much pleased with all their ideas and opinions, but in this regard they did not differ from many of their elders. The truth was that, since the growth of the fish-packing industry in Carleton had brought many new people there to live, quite a different type of citizens had sprung up alongside those whose families had lived longer in the charming old town. The new people were intent mainly on getting ahead in the world, because so far they had gone only a short distance. The older ones had gone a long distance, and were very comfortable, or else their ancestors had gone a long distance, and had made them comfortable. They rather resented what they termed "upstarts," then, and consequently Alison's carefully-selected group tended to draw off from the newcomers in the school. This was a pity for different reasons, one of which was that the latter young people were more enterprising. In fact, the only self-

starters among the older group were Alison and Mary and a couple of the boys. The others simply followed their leader, rarely expressing an opinion, but nodding agreement to authoritative pronouncements.

A shriek of admiration went up all over the room as Lucille and Ethel came in,—Lucille with her pile of green wreaths, Ethel with long, fluttering tricolor ribbons over her arm. Ignoring pressing requests to be favored, the two girls set right to work, and dealt out the honors in strict order.

"Robert Mason!" called out Ethel, glancing at the name-tag on her first ribbon. "Where is he? Smarty! Come and get your ribbon."

A small, solemn boy of twelve stalked gravely forward and held out his hand for the tricolor.

"This is to tie your partner's wreath to the first tree, you know," explained Ethel; "the directions are on the tag."

The small boy gave a stately nod, and returned to his previous occupation of doing

solitary guard-duty over a large drum reposing on the floor in one corner of the room.

The group by the window, waiting impatiently to hear their own names, stared balefully at this child. He was, indeed, somewhat calculated to arrest the eye. Very large, round, black-rimmed spectacles distorted his expression so curiously that it was never possible to know exactly how much Robert Mason saw, or just what he thought. Robert now proceeded with great precision to pin his tricolor ribbon across his plain white sweater, which bore no such " C " as decorated those of the more athletic students present, but merely a small silver medal. He produced pins for the purpose from a neat green paper in his pocket, and fastened the ribbon from his right shoulder to his left hip, very smoothly.

The watchers by the window exchanged glances of disdain, and then the tallest one of them gave evidence, by means of a lofty scowl, that things could not go on like this

any longer. He was a stalwart boy, whose fine appearance was enhanced by careful dressing and a markedly superior manner. Randolph Burnham—that was his name—bore the nickname of Ginger. Unkind tradition said the reference was to his hair in its true state, dusty-brown, wiry, and straggling as ginger-root, but Randolph preferred that it should be taken as referring to his character, especially as nowadays a powerful liquid forced the truculent hair to conform to its owner's always rigid ideals of correctness and beauty. In this character, therefore, Randolph proceeded now to action.

"Come here, Smarty Mason!" he ordered, sharply.

"What do you want, Ginger?" inquired the spectacled lad.

"I said, come here."

"I said, what do you want?"

"O my goodness!" murmured Lucille to the girl to whom she was at this moment handing a wreath. "There those two go

again! I do think that everlasting scrapping is so tiresome."

Bickering and quarreling, indeed, were so far from Lucille's nature, as they were also from the natures of her own numerous friends among the younger students of the high school, that the only reaction they aroused in her was the desire to get out of the way. As usual, she now simply shrugged her shoulders, and moved slightly away from the sparring.

"What do you mean,"—Ginger was varying the dialogue,—"fixing yourself all up like a Maypole on Memorial Day? It's not respectful!"

"Certainly is not!" buzzed his friends approvingly. "It's disrespectful!"

"I'm surprised at you, Smarty," said Ginger, gravely, "fixing yourself all up like a Maypole on Memorial Day. Take that ribbon off."

"I will not," announced Smarty, with fierce truculence.

"Then I'll make you."

"You will not!"

Ginger stepped forward. Smarty theatrically folded his arms across his bosom.

"Come on!" he invited. "I dare you to touch my *official* ribbon!"

Ginger came on, but not very fast, evidently feeling a sense of prudence.

"Yeah, it's official. You didn't think of that, but I did!" scoffingly observed Smarty. "And I specially invented this way to wear it, so's it'll stay nice and smooth and not be all mashed up before the exercises, like Tom Phillips's!"

Tom, a slim, pleasant-looking lad on the desk next that just vacated by Ginger, looked faintly uncomfortable on being thus dragged into the limelight by an accusing small child. He was the boy who had come skipping across the school-yard to offer to help Ethel open Miss Page's locker; he loved to be in everything that was going on, so perhaps it was enthusiasm, not carelessness, that had caused him to crush the ribbon Ethel had handed him during the Ginger-

Smarty dialogue, most patriotically against his heart via a breast-pocket. He was the only member of the group by the window who had received a ribbon, and none of them, as it chanced, had wreaths.

"And who says it's disrespectful to wear a ribbon this way?" proceeded Smarty, inquiringly. "I know what you'll say, Ginger Burnham: you'll say, 'Everybody!' Yeah! Who's everybody? Huh? If everybody knows so much, why doesn't anybody know this ribbon's official, huh? Why don't ——"

"Of course nobody knows as much as Smarty!" sniffed Alison, generously coming to Ginger's relief. "Nobody talks as much, anyway!"

"And will you look at him wearing his history medal!" cried Tom, rallying, too. "Ho—ho! Imagine wearing a medal you got for *studying!*"

"Where's yours? Home?" demanded Smarty, pointedly enough.

But his retort was lost in the roar that

followed Tom's jest, for Tom was popular, being a good-natured featherbrain, and Smarty was too intelligent to suit a rather dull-witted majority. The laughter was not very kindly; indeed, even Smarty might have been feeling uncomfortable, when a clear voice was heard to state gayly and incisively, "The drum-major always wears medals!"

Lucille had spoken at last, recalling, rather cleverly, that Smarty had averted the flatness of a procession without any accompaniment,—for there was no school band,—by informing the worried Miss Page: "I can beat my drum awful nice—yes'm, I mean, very well—and that'll make the procession march awful nice!" He had ungratefully been dubbed "Awful Smarty," forthwith, but he had shown himself much more useful than many who criticized his ways. Ginger deftly turned the conversation.

Ethel, one ribbon still hanging over her arm, was scanning the room anxiously. He laid a questioning finger on the tricolor.

"If that ribbon's official, I want one," he remarked. "This mine, Ethel?"

"No, Ginger, there's only one for a class."

"Who gets ours, then?"

"Will Blair. Where is he, do you know? Have you seen him?"

"I have not!" Ginger's tone was injured, as if he should not have been asked that question. "Who chose the people to get ribbons and wreaths?"

Ethel, ignoring the question, appealed to her elder brother, a big, rather shy-looking boy in a green-and-yellow "lumberjack," who was sitting on the window-sill.

"Dick, wherever do you suppose Will is?"

Dick jerked an indicating finger at the door. A stocky, keen-eyed boy in a much-darned navy-blue sweater and old knitted blue cap had just come in. He thanked Ethel for the ribbon she proffered, took it, and seated himself beside Dick.

"Who chose the people to get ribbons and wreaths?" persisted Ginger, darkly.

Alison, with another sniff, again allied herself with him.

"Miss Page, of course," she murmured; "I do think she has some of the weirdest ideas!"

Alison was about to explain in detail to an especially respectful audience why Miss Page's ideas were weird; for invitations to her graduation party, which was to be very grand, and a complete mystery until the night of its happening, were out that very day. But Lucille cruelly cut her short.

"Miss Page didn't choose the people to carry the wreaths and ribbons, Alison. The class teachers selected them. I took around her note asking them to appoint students who hadn't been in other programs this year."

"A weird idea, just as I said!" Alison's eye traveled discontentedly around the room. "My mother said the other day, when some one was talking about the anniversary celebration we're going to have, that really representative people are the best

people to take part in any community event!"

"I agree," declared Ginger, emphatically.

"Is that why you wanted a ribbon?" asked Ethel, twinkling.

Her levity was not much appreciated by Ginger or his friends, but at the moment attention was drawn from her by a charming little girl who was coming up the long room toward the hall door. She was exceptionally graceful, and her big dark eyes were serene and serious, though they looked like eyes that could dance on occasion, too. Her dark curls were dancing, all over her well-shaped little head; she was most becomingly dressed in a simple rose-colored frock. She carried a large American flag; and the task of holding the staff so it would clear the lintel of the doorway, and keep the ends of the colors from the floor, completely absorbed her.

A curious silence fell over the room. It did not speak personal hostility,—Camilla Caro, as a matter of fact, was quite a gen-

eral favorite among her companions. The silence expressed, rather, general disapproval of some unpopular state of affairs. The flag vanished into the hall. Camilla's voice,—charmingly musical,—was heard assenting to a teacher who told her to take the flag on down to the door. The teacher glanced into the front room, seemed pleased with the order prevailing, said that the procession would start almost directly, bade the students be ready for the signal, and followed Camilla. When footsteps had died on the stairs, tongues on the second floor were loosed.

"Will you tell me," demanded Ginger, "why that girl has to carry that flag today? Is that the best they can do?"

"It does seem to me it's a pity," said Mary Townsend, speaking for the first time, and quite effectively, because of her moderation. "Some of us that know the most, and want to do the most, and have been here the longest, don't seem to get much chance to celebrate, do we? One ribbon! O dear!"

A rising tide of voices now expressed the opinions that it was a perfect outrage, and also a shame and the limit; and issued a general challenge to beat it, if that should be possible.

"What's the matter?" demanded Ethel, puzzled. "Why shouldn't Camilla carry the flag to-day?"

Numerous voices advised her disdainfully, and with a rising inflection:

"A foreigner?"

"She isn't," retorted Ethel indignantly, almost as if Camilla's character was being attacked; "she was born in Carleton ——"

"But her people!" shuddered Alison.

"They eat spaghetti all the time!" declared Tom.

"She isn't just exactly like a real American, do you think so?" queried Mary, gently.

"This is Memorial Day," pointed out Ginger, sternly, for he had already told Smarty the same thing. "Haven't you got any real patriotic feeling?"

"I certainly have!" hissed Ethel, turning

on the elegant youth sharply. "What do you mean to insinuate by talking to me that way?"

Now Ginger was not a lad to plan out his remarks far ahead; he probably had no very clear idea of exactly what he did mean, otherwise than to express a general feeling of shock over Ethel's divergence from public opinion; and he had a very healthy respect for the powers of self-defense which that lively damsel possessed. Taken quite unaware, he jumped and stammered; and for the third time that morning Alison, who certainly seemed to be a faithful friend, came to his rescue.

"What we all mean," she snapped, addressing Ethel, "is: Do you really think,"—she dwelt with awful emphasis on the "you,"—"that a girl who lives on a truck-farm is a representative leader for our procession today?"

And now it was Ethel who jumped and stammered, for Alison had pierced her Achilles heel,—on purpose, Ethel knew.

For the Merriams were not originally Carleton people, but had moved there when Dick and Ethel were tiny children, when their father, one of the town's ablest business men, had bought the big fish-packing plant. Dick, strong and loyal and intelligent, was accepted by the boys as one of themselves; but Ethel, with many of the same qualities, had not got on quite so well with the girls. She and Lucille Douglas had formed a most firm and affectionate friendship, it was true, but many of the other girls who were Lucille's friends kept Ethel somewhat at arm's length. Perhaps she was too able and enthusiastic to suit people not quite so gifted; perhaps she showed herself too eager to be on close terms with a group of young ladies who were very cautious about "outsiders." At all events, she was still outside the charmed circle; and now, alas, hit in a tender spot by Alison's unexpected question, she deplorably appeared far from her best.

Ethel had no personal feeling whatever

against Camilla's carrying the flag at any time; but she was so eager not to affront, in any way, the crowd of which she longed to be an acknowledged member, that her moral courage failed her,—failed her for one instant, and then it was too late. She hesitated, and saw she was lost, for the crowd began to smile. Ethel turned bright red and choked; and Lucille perceived, not without a sense of shame, that she certainly could have again intervened sooner.

"It's Camilla's regular turn to carry the flag to-day!" she cried vigorously. "You know perfectly well that we take it for the salute in alphabetical order, as our turn comes."

No one except Ethel looked pleased at this sensible observation; things had gone too far, moreover, for even this bit of wisdom to be effective.

"Well, they haven't any business to spoil our celebration, just for an old rule," muttered Ginger.

"Especially when we have so few of those

in poor dear slow old Carleton!" protested Mary, whimsically.

Alison sniffed agreement. "Such a weird idea to feature conceited little double-eyed nuts, and people who don't belong ——!"

"Listen!" cried Tom, struck by an idea that seemed very bright to him. "Do you suppose the town council will get the beach people to run the anniversary celebration?"

As the people who lived in the small cottages on the beach had all come recently to Carleton, and were the last, probably, to be interested in its two hundred years of history, a ripple of giggles greeted this sally. In the midst of the mirth, Tom did have one small twinge of regret for his wit. For Will Blair, whose presence he had forgotten, was glancing soberly out of the window; Will lived on the beach because it was the only place his family could afford to live, and Tom was not a bad-natured boy, though a very silly one, and he was sorry if he had hurt Will, who was a "good scout." He

also noticed, somewhat abashed, that Dick Merriam, seated beside Will, was scarlet with anger, and glaring at his sister; for Ethel had actually tittered, and was glancing hopefully for approval at Alison.

But Tom's jest had certainly amused the majority present. This majority had strong, if entirely vague, ideals of patriotism and local pride, and felt that the celebration, not being sufficiently in their own hands, was not in the right hands.

"I think we ought to make a protest," declared Alison.

In a single instant her words had fanned the flicker of dissatisfaction to a flame of wrath.

"I say we take a wreath and some more ribbons!" urged Ginger.

"No, no," warned Mary. "They're assigned; we'd get into trouble ——"

"Well—the flag's not assigned!"

"I guess we oughtn't to take it from Camilla; I mean, better not interfere with the flag," suggested Tom, uneasily.

"Shucks, we don't need to take it! We can just ask her, nicely, to let one of the older girls carry it on this special day."

"I'll carry it," offered Alison, anticipating a similar offer on Mary's lips.

"But if people notice the change ——"

"For Pete's sake, Tom Phillips, isn't that what we want 'em to notice?" demanded Ginger.

Mary intervened gently. "I'll ask Camilla, if you like. I'll be as nice as I can be."

As she turned toward the hall, Lucille raised her voice and spoke incisively. It was all she could do, though she knew she was too late.

"Are you trying to get everybody into an awful mess?" she demanded of the group near the window. Hostile silence answered her. She stood her ground alone; Ethel was discounted, and the few boys and girls who had been listening to the conversation without assenting to it were what was known as "unimportant." Lucille went on resolutely,

bitterly regretting her delay: "How can we change program arrangements, that are none of our business, without getting into all sorts of trouble? Anyway, there's nothing the matter with them. You don't want anybody but yourselves to have a chance, that's what it is! Why, it's Memorial Day ——"

"Just the day for people who believe in real patriotism to show it!" blazed Alison, hurrying on, perhaps so she would not be asked what she meant by real patriotism; "so come on, people, let's get the flag!"

"We'll explain to Camilla very nicely —" began Ginger.

"You'll explain nothing," announced Dick Merriam.

He was standing squarely beside Lucille, having come over, unobserved in the excitement, from the window-sill. Lucille breathed a sigh of relief too quickly; for instantly words were flying like blows.

"Why sha'n't I explain anything?" demanded Ginger.

"I'll stop you."

"You will, eh? How?"

"I'll see that whoever has a right to that flag to-day gets that right."

"Well, I'll see that the right people here get their rights!"

"*All* right. Come on outside—if you dare."

Ethel flung herself forward frantically.

"Dick! Don't fight, *please!* What does it matter ——"

Dick unceremoniously shoved her aside, none too gently. Will Blair tried to seize him, and was sent careening into a corner. Ginger, panting with wrath, but supported by a majority, badly scared as it was beginning to show itself, whisked out of the door on Dick's heels, followed into the empty hall by all the other boys in a wild stampede.

Lucille dashed to the window; but before she could reach it, there came a crash—a silence—Dick's voice: "Get up! I want to hit you again!"—scrambling ——

Then, through the frightened groups of

girls, a small figure scurried into the room, and next instant out burst a long rumble, unceasing, ever louder, clearer; and Smarty marched out of the door, beating the roll on his drum.

The building reverberated to its rhythmical call as this swept up and down the stair-well. When Miss Page dashed trembling into the lower hall, she came face to face with Camilla and the flag on the lowest step of the stairs, with Smarty and the sounding drum half-way up, and the whole school most obediently falling in behind.

CHAPTER III

BAD AND SAD

THE formation of the procession, indeed, was quite suspiciously good. The seven couples who were to decorate the trees followed directly after the resounding drum, the girls with their green wreaths on their right arms, the boys with the red, white, and blue ribbons streaming over their left arms; and at first glance they lent an especially picturesque appearance to a sedate and orderly parade.

But nobody—actually, nobody—was whispering; faces were curiously pale, except two or three that were violently flushed,—Ethel's, for one. Dick Merriam's eyes glittered strangely, Ginger Burnham's clothes looked remarkably dusty for so neat a dresser, and—what was the matter with his face? And why did so many of the marchers appear to be quivering all over? And what

made Mr. Lowrie look so grim? The exchange of a whispered word with another teacher did not reassure Miss Page regarding the prospects of the program over which she had labored so faithfully.

Out in the yard the school took up position in a charming setting for the celebration. Along the fence which divided the school grounds from the highway, seven young trees had been planted; their luxuriant foliage was fluttering bravely in the salt breeze. Around their roots the wind ruffled the circle-shaped, silver-lined leaves of budding nasturtiums, and the little wrought-iron fence that protected each sapling bore a freshly polished bronze nameplate, over which sunshine and shadow were rhythmically playing.

To a final command from the drum, the boys and girls lined up in double rank, facing the trees. No doubt, before they got there, probably before they were out of the building, a realization of the bad spirit which had brought such havoc on them almost in

an instant, had presented itself as a shock to most of them. But how far selfishness and intolerance had led them one and all to forget themselves and the occasion they were commemorating was borne in on them as they stood looking at the trees planted in honor of seven Carleton schoolboys of long ago whose patriotism had certainly been unified and effective. A sense of shock began to give place to a sense of shame, and many an anxious glance was cast across the fence, to see if, among the number of spectators who had now joined Captain Jim, any report of events up-stairs had as yet spread.

Among these spectators was a figure which did not decrease the general uneasiness. It was that of a very tall, upright, austere-looking elderly man, who was standing in the road quite apart from everybody else, and watching proceedings with a very sharp eye. This elderly man was Judge Trenholm himself, and if he did not like young people, neither, alas, did they like him. A good many of them now felt that

perhaps his presence was the crowning touch to a pretty bad start toward a finish that quite possibly would be worse.

Mr. Lowrie may have felt apprehensive himself. With a warning determination quite unlike his usual encouraging warmth, he nodded briskly to Mary Townsend. She was the school song-leader, and the nod was the signal for her to start the chorus which was to open the simple program. The program consisted of only three numbers, and the decoration of the trees, and doubtless Mr. Lowrie thought that there was a good chance, at least, that Mary, so invariably self-possessed, could start things right. His glance in her direction had showed that he relied on her.

To do her justice, she made a special effort to begin well. She had a clear, full voice, not particularly expressive, but possessing almost perfect pitch, and she should have been just the person for the emergency. She parted her lips at once, and began the easy, familiar music of " America." At the

end of three bars it was perfectly evident that no one would finish the song, unless the school suddenly produced some hitherto hidden operatic soprano.

The imperturbable Mary had, in fact, suffered an attack of nerves. For the first time in her life she had pitched a chorus in an impossibly high key. One after one, her comrades were forced to leave her, although she herself kept bravely on, disturbed as she was. She felt, no doubt, that for her to break down would be to make things even worse than they already were, and her behavior was gallant, if futile. Her companions were horror-stricken, the audience in the road gaped and then looked scandalized; faint titters could be heard as the chorus got thinner, squeakier ——

"George Anderson," mercifully announced Mr. Lowrie in loud accents, saving Mary from collapse just in time, "will speak on 'The Meaning of Our Exercises.'"

A wave of relief swept over the whole scene, as George, a matter-of-fact, stout-

hearted lad with the taste, for once most acceptable, for making speeches, stepped forward confidently.

George possessed two desirable qualities for an orator: one was a resonant voice, the other a pleasing ease of manner, from which self-consciousness was wholly absent. He began readily:

"Friends and comrades! The meaning of this day itself is already well appreciated by all of us, so it is not on that that I would speak; it is, rather, on *this* ——"

He flung out the demonstrative pronoun with such emphasis that startled glances were cast in many directions to see where "this" was actually materializing; and before recovery could be made from the second shock of finding it nowhere, he had drawn a full breath, and resumed.

"I would explain," proclaimed George, in deep, resounding accents, "the special meaning of the decoration of these trees. They are a monument—a *memorial*—a COMMEMORATION ——"

The listeners, even the most distant, stood agape with horror and apprehension. George's voice swelled and swelled, and sank and sank. All that he said was excellent, and he said it with the sincerest feeling; but obviously he had not an idea that he was speaking in any louder tone than usual, though the ear-drums of his audience were on the verge of cracking. He was not a large boy; but his voice grew so enormous that everybody was wondering, half-hysterically, where on earth it all came from, and if it wasn't going to do him some terrible injury, when, with a final burst of speed and noise, he came to his last period. As he stepped back to his place in the ranks, a wave of relief infinitely heartier than that which had greeted his beginning, hailed his conclusion.

"Gee!" whispered George to his neighbors, wholly unconscious of his deficiencies; "I was fearfully nervous, somehow; but I wouldn't show it!"

Mr. Lowrie, looking rather limp, perhaps

also for some obscure reason, made his next announcement.

"Mildred Wrenn will recite a set of verses entitled: 'The Patriot Flower.'"

Mildred stepped forward, a bright, attractive little red-headed girl. She was a classmate of Lucille's and Ethel's, and such a general favorite that even the worst people present, let alone the best, noted with grave concern that she looked quite unlike her usual self.

The truth was that Mildred usually recited very well because she was sensitive and intelligent; but now, these two qualities were handicapping her. She understood only too well, and felt only too keenly, the bitterness, the bad spirit, that had led to so many hard words and even to blows, upstairs; she knew it was shame which had so shaken everybody that the program down here was nearly ruined. Her nerves were by no means equal to George's, nor her nerve to Mary's. Her voice trembled distressingly as she began:

"Shall I tell you why nasturtiums flame
Everywhere where heroes are recalled?
Shall I tell the meaning of their name ——"

Alas, it was fated that Mildred should tell nothing at all! Suddenly, and awfully, she went all to pieces. Her voice stopped short, her head dropped; then she jerked it up with a wild glance, caught sight of the path to the schoolhouse, and took flight up it as if a whole tribe of Indian warriors were hot on her trail!

It was the climax to a most startling performance. Mr. Lowrie took command of his nerve-shaken company with a sternness for which everybody present was most devoutly grateful.

"The bearers of the wreaths and ribbons will now decorate the trees," he ordered. "Girls, take your stations in front of your respective trees! Boys, tie the ribbons on your partners' wreaths! Girls, lift the wreaths up; boys, cross the ribbons around the trees, and tie the wreaths in place. Mind what you are doing, all of you."

This last adjuration came as a result of a wild jerk bestowed by Will Blair's luckless partner on the wreath she was supposedly holding still, which broke one end of the ribbon off short. But Will, who was not unready in emergencies, snatched the fluttering end still attached to the wreath, and quickly fashioned out of it a sort of sailor's knot, for which he was indebted to long-ago instructions from Captain Jim. On the whole, the unimportant persons to whom most of the decoration had been assigned, acquitted themselves creditably, thanks to Mr. Lowrie's repetition of the directions on the tags attached to the wreaths and ribbons, every detail of which had gone completely out of the performers' minds. The conclusion of the exercises, therefore, was somewhat less dreadful than might have been expected. The decorators stepped back into rank, feeling that perhaps they had saved the day after all, for the wreaths and ribbons formed a charming line of color against the young trees in the sunshine. Next minute

came welcome orders to march back to the place of assembly, and disband.

But despite the thumps of Smarty's heartening drum, new depression began to spread through the ranks. And now, where once nobody could speak, nobody could keep quiet any longer.

"What's the matter? What's happened?" came anxious whispers, as the procession wound up-stairs and into the front room again.

And return whispers announced: "Judge Trenholm left! Before we started decorating, he left!"

As ranks broke, whispers became piercing exclamations. "Did you see him?" "Wasn't he awful!" "Well, wasn't everything awful?" "I wonder if he'll do anything?" "What can he do?" "Well, I'll say this has been one pretty bad morning." "Come on, let's get out!"

Certainly no one lingered voluntarily. Dick and Ginger lingered some time, it was true, but on special pressing invitation from

Mr. Lowrie. Everybody sought consolation from disaster far from school; there was none there, save, possibly, in some small pink envelopes which a number of students might have been seen taking from their desks, and clutching, as they made off for home, as if in them, at least, there was some comfort.

Lucille had one, and she hurried over to Ethel, half holding it out. But Ethel, now white as a sheet after her fever-flush, was looking so extremely queer that Lucille slipped Alison's prized invitation, which was what the envelope contained, into her pocket, and urged, on the spur of the moment: "Come home to lunch with me, do! We can stop at your house and get your headband for the party, and we can work on them afterwards."

"Thanks so much. I guess I have to go and see my aunt this afternoon," returned Ethel, in a strange, far-away voice. "I guess maybe Mother will want me to."

The visit didn't sound very settled.

Lucille took her troubled friend's arm affectionately, as they left the building.

"Don't worry about this morning," she whispered; "boys always scrap and make it up. Come on to lunch!"

Of course she meant: "Don't worry about a mistake you made once, because surely you'll never make it again." Ethel understood that, and saw that Lucille understood the shame she now felt, already, over having tried so discreditably to curry favor with Alison. But all she did was to shake her head dolefully.

Lucille tried again to cheer her.

"Let's take our work down to Battery Cape to-morrow," she proposed.

"It's too cold to sit outdoors yet," said Ethel hastily.

"Oh, nonsense!" Lucille laughed at the silly excuse.

"Well, I have outside reading to do in the English room."

"Then say you'll go Monday. Come, Ethel, we must get those headbands done.

I'd make you go Saturday, but Dad's taking me to Hallett for the week-end."

"Oh, is he?" murmured Ethel, reflectively. "Well ——"

"And the party's just a week off tonight, you know; you've just got your invitation." Lucille was thoroughly perplexed by Ethel's reluctance.

"I know," assented Ethel. "Very well, I'll go to Battery Cape on Monday."

But she said nothing more all the way up the long hill, near the crest of which both girls lived in pleasant homes on an elm-bordered road overlooking blue Hallett Bay. Distressed as she was over the untoward events of that bad, sad morning, Lucille wisely refrained just then from discussing them at all with her friend, who had been so unfortunately involved in them. She was even more distressed by Ethel's inexplicably queer behavior. But she had to wait four whole days longer before any confidences or explanations came.

CHAPTER IV

ON BATTERY CAPE

"YOU'RE lucky to have been away, Lucille," declared Ethel, still rather morose, as the two girls turned down the beach road on Monday afternoon. "I'm glad you had a good time; nobody here did. It's been awfully dull, and everybody has been scolding us, and telling us how terribly we acted. But do they tell us what to do about it? Not that I've noticed!"

"It's very hard to have things like that," admitted Lucille. "I'm glad Alison's party's giving us something else to think about. Oh, Ethel, my white dress is nearly finished; just a little of the silver braid needs to be sewed on. I've brought a strip of écru net for my headband, and I'm going to sew silver beads on it, in a star design. The net, you see, won't show against my hair; there'll

be just a wreath of stars! What did you decide to make, to go with your pink dress?"

"I'll tell you all about it when we sit down," answered Ethel, fretfully. "My head aches."

"Oh, I'm sorry; we'll find a nice place in the shade," soothed Lucille, much concerned that Ethel should show such amazing indifference to an affair of dress. It seemed wholly unnatural.

A brief silence fell between the two friends, until, at the foot of the hill before them, they saw a familiar little figure coming down the steps of the small general store which was situated at the point where the road turned toward the beach.

"Why, there's Camilla Caro," murmured Ethel, surprised.

"All dressed up, too," added Lucille. "Let's see: she wasn't at school to-day, was she?—or Friday, either?"

The graceful little figure in starched blue cotton and stiff black shoes waved back at the two girls, just as her progress toward

them was interrupted. In a small, battered white cottage next the store dwelt Carleton's largest and most cheerfully happy-go-lucky family, the Hawleys. At this instant four of the younger Hawleys, all under eight years of age, who had been engaged in making super-mud-pies out of what in most homes would have been the front lawn, and decorating these comestibles with gorgeous designs in pop-corn kernels, perceived Camilla passing by. With yells of delight that would have made a red Comanche turn green with envy, they hurled themselves toward her with one accord.

"Camilla, come and see my pie!"

"Camilla, come and see *my* pie!"

"Camilla, make a boat, make a boat!"

"Camilla, up, up! *Up!*"

The popular passer-by laughed and halted. Swinging the importunate Hawley aged two off the ground, she produced from her pocket a piece of paper of a size guaranteed to make a great big boat, and organized a hand-in-hand procession for a tour

of pie inspection, just as Lucille and Ethel reached her.

"Well, Camilla," said Lucille, "we missed you at school. I hope you haven't been sick?"

Camilla shook her head with a smile of acknowledgment for the inquiry; but it was a smile unlike her usual merry one. Nor did she, despite denial, look particularly well, for her face appeared a trifle thinner, and her bright color was several shades paler than usual.

"Oh, no; I—I just had to stay home," she answered, hesitatingly.

"Can we help you make up anything?" offered Ethel, eagerly.

Camilla, while in the class below that of the two girls, was taking an extra course with them, so that she might, if possible, skip a term; she was planning early to prepare for advanced study in a higher school. Usually she was most appreciative of help; but now, to Ethel's offer, she surprisingly returned no reply whatever. Her face fell,

her eyes sought the ground. Then, as she finally sought to stammer something, came an interruption most welcome to all three girls, alike embarrassed by Camilla's curious behavior.

Piercing shrieks advised the neighborhood that marauding chickens were consuming the artistic pop-corn designs on the mud-pies; and Camilla, burden and all, dashed at top speed to the pursuit of the invaders and the consolation of the artists, leaving conversation where it had dropped.

So Lucille and Ethel proceeded on their way, past the scattered cottages on the beach, past the long line of pleasant homes set picturesquely above the dunes, and on down to the very end of Battery Cape, a charmingly-situated spot which, though long allowed to fall into a neglected condition, afforded a delightful resting-place for all who wanted a fine view and a breathing-spell in the salt breezes.

This promontory formed the nearest thing to a public park that Carleton possessed. It

was called Battery Cape because, for over seventy years, it had been ornamented with five curious, obsolete cannon, presented to his native town by some congressman of long ago, as interesting war relics. To-day these fierce old cannon were esteemed as peaceful resting-places, for the wheels of their antique wooden carriages had sunk deep into the ground, bringing the long black barrels so near the grass that one might recline at ease there, and lean comfortably against a gun. The five guns were arranged in a semicircle, above a gentle depression that gave a small natural amphitheatre, sloping down to the beach.

The cape was a favorite haunt of the two girls, and they knew how to make themselves comfortable there. As usual, they now settled themselves at once against the cannon nearest the sea, sheltered from the sun, and facing the blue crescent of Hallett Bay, with its busy docks just below them. Lucille, taking a strip of gauzy stuff and a bunch of silver beads from her work-bag, paused a

second to give a friendly wave toward one of the houses set above the dunes,—a gray one, framed in lilac-bushes. Ethel looked up inquiringly.

"That's just Robert Mason, over there helping his mother in the garden," explained Lucille, untying the string that held the beads, and slipping them into an envelope.

Ethel, looking unaccountably irritable, made no preparations whatever for industry.

"Why do you always call that child by his name?" she snapped.

"I think his nickname's silly," returned Lucille, threading a needle; "that is, silly for him. 'Smarty'—he's not a smart aleck, like some."

"He's always doing the most outlandish things; and he always thinks they're smart, anyhow."

"Well, Ethel, a good many of them are smart! He can't help doing them. I think lots of people resent his being brighter than they are, so they try to run him down by giving him a foolish name," ventured Lu-

cille, not without penetration. "He can't possibly like it, either."

"I don't believe it makes any impression on him," denied Ethel. "Did you hear what Tom Phillips said to him?"

"No. What was it?"

"He asked what perpetual motion was; and Tom said, 'Your tongue!' But he goes right on talking, just the same."

Lucille giggled.

"Oh, well! He does more than talk—he's pretty active, I mean."

She thought she had saved herself just in time; for certainly she had no intention of alluding to that previous forlorn Thursday, on which Ethel and Ethel's brother had had such disastrous experiences. But Ethel had sensed the meaning her friend had meant to conceal, and apparently didn't mind in the least.

"You're thinking of those terrible exercises on Memorial Day, aren't you, Lucille? Well, certainly Smarty did more than talk that time. Oh, Lucille, wasn't it awful?

And it's got worse and worse! I'm worried just nearly sick about Dick!"

So it was coming; Ethel was going to talk, at last!

"Did Mr. Lowrie scold him much for knocking Ginger down?" ventured Lucille.

"Oh, he might have been lots worse,—it wasn't only that. Of course Dick had to admit that he lost his head, and shouldn't have started anything in the school building, and with girls there. But Mr. Lowrie did say he saw that Dick felt he was defending democratic principles; and I guess he scared Ginger nearly into spasms for trying to interfere with the program. Of course Ginger was furious at Alison; she really started the whole trouble, and Mary helped her, but Ginger couldn't say a word about them, and they weren't caught. But Dick can't get over the way nearly everybody backed Ginger."

"That was the worst thing," agreed Lucille, soberly. "Those people just assumed that they had more rights than anybody

else because they're a little more prominent; so they thought they could dictate to everybody else."

"And," continued Ethel, returning to Dick, "he told Dad that this place was the worst hole on earth! And he has talked about Ben Porter,—you know, Captain Jim's grandson who never comes home any more,—and how he had to go away to succeed, until, positively, I wonder if he's going to run away himself! And oh, Lucille, he'll hardly speak to me!"

Lucille felt distressed, but scarcely knew what to say; she realized, as she saw Ethel did, also, that that instant of hesitation when Ethel refused to insist on Camilla's rights for the sake of currying favor with Alison's crowd, had shaken Dick's confidence, had perhaps added to his disrespect for the town where he had his home. And now Ethel's eyes began to fill; her head went down on the long black cannon beside her. Worse was coming!

In vain did Lucille seek to comfort her,

urge her to tell what was the matter, and point out that she could speak freely, for they were all alone; even the gardeners in the lilac-yard had now gone indoors. Ethel wept disconsolately for a long time, before she finally blurted out, with a heartrending sob that showed the depths of a terrible personal wound: "Oh, Lucille! Alison hasn't invited me to her party, after all!"

"Ethel! It's impossible!"

Lucille sank back in consternation. Then this was why Ethel wasn't making a headband, this was why she had been so dreadfully blue! And Alison had said publicly, often, that the whole school crowd was to be invited.

"It's what happened," Ethel was saying, dully. "You know she put the notes into the desks on Thursday morning, but we were busy distributing the wreaths and ribbons, so you didn't get yours until after the program. And I saw you taking yours out, and I saw the other people that had theirs, so I went to get mine, and there was none.

And Alison hasn't spoken to me since that morning."

"Then at least she's ashamed of herself!" cried Lucille, wrathfully. "The idea of going back on her word that way!"

"It's my own fault," said Ethel, with a clear-sightedness that was almost disconcerting. "If I had stood up to her about Camilla, she'd have respected me. But she saw I was a snob, and she's one herself, so she took it out on me!"

"Why didn't you tell me sooner?"

"I wanted you to have a good time planning to go."

"I don't want to go if you're not going!" cried Lucille, as deeply touched by Ethel's considerate affection as she was vexed by Alison's slight. "It's the meanest thing I ever heard of. I don't care if I have accepted. I shall ask Mother how to get out of going!"

"Don't," advised Ethel, with such experienced prudence that Lucille giggled in the midst of her woe.

Perhaps Ethel, too, felt relief after telling her troubles to sympathetic ears. Her eyes finally showed a watery twinkle, too.

"Of course you must go, Lucille," she said, earnestly. "I wanted you to, all along. What earthly good would it do if you stayed away? It would just make more feeling, and there's enough anyhow."

Lucille had to admit to herself that Ethel was sensible, and, as a mute sign of assent, reluctantly resumed work on her silver stars.

"Well, if it really could make things any better, I shouldn't mind going," she said; "but it does seem to me that there has been absolutely no end of trouble in this town since last Thursday. I was hoping maybe it was over, and it just seems to get worse, what with all you've told me this afternoon. And I thought Camilla looked awfully queer, didn't you? I wonder if something more is going to happen? What in the world are we coming to, Ethel?"

"I'm afraid that's more than I can tell you," said Ethel, mournfully, but sitting up

with sudden briskness. "But look and see what's coming to us! Smarty Mason, upon my word,—and will you look at him!"

Up from the road, indeed, Smarty himself was marching, bearing carefully in both hands a familiar and much-esteemed object of art,—at least, of culinary art: that delightful edible known among all the younger set in Carleton as a double hot dog. What could be in the wind?

CHAPTER V

THE SILVER PLAQUE

SMARTY bore down on the girls genially.

"Hello!" was his greeting. "Have some?"

"Why, how generous you are!" cried Lucille, delighted and surprised at this mark of favor from the usually exclusive Robert.

The double hot dog, indeed, was a somewhat expensive treat. It had been so named by the younger set in Carleton as a recognition of the liberality of a popular vendor named Joe, who kept a stand near the store on the beach road. A regular-sized hot dog cost ten cents, but for fifteen Joe would make his younger patrons one three-quarters larger; he did not extend this privilege to grown-ups.

"My mother," explained Smarty, neatly

breaking the sandwich into three equal parts, "gave me the fifteen cents for helping her in the garden."

He settled himself comfortably against one of the adjacent cannon, and began to munch.

"Why did you go and spend it right on us?" asked Ethel, taking an appreciative bite.

"I was sorry for you," replied Smarty, with grave directness. "You shouldn't mind about Alison, though. What does she matter? She is a horrid girl."

Lucille nearly dropped her sandwich. Smarty must have seen Ethel in the doldrums before he stopped gardening! Ethel gave a loud gasp; but humor and curiosity kept her from being too much affronted.

"You fresh child, what do you know about Alison?" she demanded.

"I led the procession back up-stairs with my drum, and she came running, and snaked the pink envelope out of your desk. I saw her. She's an awful horrid girl, *I* think."

Awful Smarty! Yet a sympathetic soul, indeed! Had he not himself been publicly classed as a conceited little double-eyed nut? Ethel, touched as well as amused, felt moved, nevertheless, to suggest to the embattled child, though in a tone that showed appreciation: "What's over is over, Robert; and hard thoughts can't make things better, you know."

The thick glasses through which the consoler saw so effectively glittered with return appreciation, as their owner heard his rightful name. He became further confidential.

"Have you two heard the big news?" he demanded. "We're not going to get our celebration!"

"What? What celebration? Not the one for the Carleton anniversary?" cried both girls, so startled that even their informant was satisfied.

He nodded vigorously.

"But why not?"

"Because," announced Smarty, greatly pleased with the sensation he was making,

" the old people think the young ones are a lot of frights!"

"*What?*"

"Yes! They're picking on us something terrible! They say we haven't any manners or brains or self-respect. Think of it!"

Smarty beamed in modest admiration of the achievements of his generation.

"Will you kindly tell us what you are talking about?" demanded Ethel, desperately.

Smarty expanded in the luxurious manner of one about to relate a really thrilling story.

"Well," he began, "I had to go to the store before I went to Joe's, to get my mother a small can of pimentoes. And there were a lot of people there, all buzzing away about the town council meeting that was held this morning; and it seemed they had decided they wouldn't hold any celebration of the two-hundredth anniversary. And then it turned out that it was Judge Trenholm who had really stopped it!"

"What!" cried Lucille. "Judge Trenholm! I thought he was prouder of the town than anybody else."

"Well, he stopped it, anyhow. You know he came to our exercises, Memorial Day; well, they shocked him so awful that he left before they were over ——"

"That's a fact," murmured Ethel.

"He'd got there during the rumpus upstairs; and he found out all about it; and he noticed how terrible Ginger looked, and Dick, and everybody, and how badly we sang, and recited, and everything. So when the council met this morning, they talked things over, and most of them agreed with him that they couldn't hold a good celebration without plenty of young people to take part, and that our spirit isn't the real old Carleton spirit, so we couldn't be relied on to make it go off; so they voted down the motion to have it. And the vote is final."

The faithful reporter paused; and, indeed, there seemed nothing more for any one to say. Wholly disheartened by the collapse

of hopes they had shared with every one in the town, the trio sat gazing forlornly across Battery Cape, with its poor straggling grasses, its neglected semicircle of old guns, its stray papers and tin cans. Not until a few minutes later, when the wind unexpectedly turned and brought with it an unmistakable whiff of the famous Hallett Bay codfish drying in the sun on long tables in the field behind the packing-sheds on the dock, was the silence broken. Then Ethel gave a long, disdainful sniff.

"There's Carleton for you! Nothing but codfish!"

"We'd be badly off if it wasn't for the codfish, though," ventured Lucille mildly; "especially you, Ethel!"

Ethel ignored the allusion to her father's good business.

"For two hundred years," she pursued disparagingly, "fishermen have been hauling codfish to this town, and there's no reason to doubt that, two hundred years from this very afternoon, fishermen will be

tearing up to that dock in whatever they use then instead of motor-boats, and dumping their catch on the scales the way they're doing this minute!"

"Then there's something good about poor old Carleton after all!" cried Lucille loyally. "Oh, I do think it's dreadful not to celebrate our founding! Think of all the town's done! Think of the Carleton men in the Revolution, and in clipper-ship days, and in forty-nine! And the girls and women were always just as good as the men! They always were wonderful teachers and nurses and craft-workers—and one of them married the minister to France, and one was president of a college ——"

"Dear child," broke in Ethel impatiently, "everything you have mentioned happened at least forty years ago—some of it a hundred and fifty years ago! What modern things have we to be proud of, except the codfish, perhaps?"

"We sent twenty-four men overseas," returned Lucille, stoutly.

"That shows we can do something, if we have to, I admit," said Ethel. "Well, why don't you go on with the list?"

Lucille looked downcast, as she was unable to reply. Smarty, who had been listening attentively, chimed in eagerly, "It must be what Captain Jim says!"

"What are you talking about, Robert?" inquired Lucille, puzzled at this sudden switch in the conversation.

"Why, I met Captain Jim at Joe's; he was drinking ginger ale ——"

"What does he think about the town-council decision?" interrupted Ethel.

"That's what I'm going to tell you. He was very down in the mouth. His grandson, Ben Porter, radio man of the *Algonquin,* hasn't written to him this month,—at least, the letter's three days late, he told me. And he was disgusted at the decision, and said he thought the old people here were lots worse than the young ones! Yes, he did; he's awful old, and can say what he pleases, you know. And finally he said to me ——"

Smarty paused mysteriously, giving the impression that the captain had certainly spoken to him as man to man.

"He said to me: 'I—tell—you'—you know the way he talks, so slow and positive!—'I tell you, I'm coming to believe it's true that what this whole town needs, if it's ever going to be itself again, is *the silver plaque!* Yes, sir, I'm coming to believe that, as sure as the head, hand and heart rule together!'"

The girls looked perplexed.

"Well, whatever he means, he believes it," frowned Ethel; "for he always says that about the head, hand, and heart when he's in dead earnest, though it sounds like awful nonsense to me. But what on earth is the silver plaque?"

"Oh!" exclaimed Lucille involuntarily. On the second mention of the word "plaque," a flash of intelligence lit her hazel eyes.

"Do you know, Lucille?" asked Smarty.

"I believe I've heard of it," she responded slowly; "I think my father must have men-

tioned it to me sometime or other. But I don't remember very clearly. Is it a sort of town treasure ——?"

"That's it!" Smarty's voice sank to a low, thrilling whisper. "It's a lost treasure! Captain Jim told me about it; he says the young folks here don't know about it, and the old ones don't like to talk about it. Yes; the silver plaque that belonged to Carleton once was a big flat plate made of solid silver, and engraved with the English royal crest, and—a codfish!"

"A codfish!" echoed Ethel, much impressed.

Smarty swept on.

"You see, about a hundred and seventy years ago, when this state was still a colony, there was a terrible hurricane in the West Indies, and the crops on one of the islands were entirely destroyed. But a lot of Carleton fishermen, hearing of the disaster, took down a fleet of boats, loaded with codfish, in such record time that the people of the island were saved from famine. So the

King of England presented Carleton with the silver plaque in recognition of the feat, and it's always been the great town treasure ——"

"But we've never seen it!" interrupted Ethel.

"Of course not; forty years ago it disappeared out of its case in the town hall, and no one has ever known one single thing about it from that day to this!"

Lucille's curiosity was too great for her to let Smarty enjoy the effect of his mysterious climax very long.

"Why," she inquired, "does Captain Jim say the town needs this silver plaque, specially?"

"Because it's just forty years, you see, since the town began to be less prosperous than in the old days, and lots of the old folks, it seems, are sort of superstitious about that. They think there was some connection, the captain says, between the presence of the plaque and the good old times; it's gone, you see, and so are they."

"Well, I don't see ——" began Lucille, doubtfully; but she was interrupted.

"Robert!" called a firm voice through the golden air of the late afternoon; "Ro-o-o-bert!"

"Ye-e-s'm!" returned Smarty, scrambling to his feet. "That's my mother," he explained; "maybe she wants the pimentoes; she has five people coming to supper; she might want to get the salad started. Good-bye!"

Off he bolted across the dunes, toward the house among the lilac-bushes, the small can of pimentoes bulging from his sweater-pocket, and beating rhythmically against his hip.

Lucille laughed heartily, but finished her sentence.

"I don't see how an old silver plaque can help us!"

"To think of Captain Jim being superstitious!" cried Ethel. "I do see now, though, something I never understood before. Do you know, Lucille, that story

must have been what was in his mind that day he was talking to us at the school gate; don't you remember, I suggested that you were talking about the cur-r-rse of Carleton ——"

"Why, that was nothing but a joke!"

"Of course; I never heard of the plaque until now. But he must have thought I was alluding to it, and as he declared then that there wasn't any 'curse,' it looks as if maybe he felt a little discouraged, after all the fuss at the exercises, and his grandson not writing, and now, as a final blow, no celebration."

Lucille nodded, and looked discouraged, herself.

"Well," she said, as if making a final effort to be hopeful, "I don't see how things can get much worse."

"Exactly what I think!" cried Ethel with a hearty vigor that was absolutely startling. "You know, Lucille, you can get so sick that you've either got to die or get well, and it looks to me as if that was the state this

town of ours is in, as regards the way the different kinds of people in it get along. Well, certainly there's no prospect of its dying, so, if things have got as bad as they can be, they've got to get better!"

"Sounds logical!" smiled Lucille, not entirely convinced, perhaps, but admiring Ethel's healthy optimism.

"So," pursued Ethel, "it's come to me—I was thinking about all our terrible troubles, and my own, while Smarty was talking—that what we really need is to start fresh, and go ahead. I can't make anybody do that but myself, but it's what I've decided to do. I've been foolish; but I've had a good sharp lesson, and I'm not going to stay foolish!"

"Ethel, you're a dear! What are you going to do?"

"Start fresh and go straight ahead," repeated Ethel. "First? Oh, first I shall explain my program to Dick, and make everything up with him. Then I'll do whatever comes next!"

"I wish I could start fresh, too," sighed Lucille, really envying Ethel her courage and energy. "I'm in a nice, good rut, do you know it? Nothing bad happens to me; but where do I get?"

Ethel, remembering how Lucille had hinted something of the sort that other day at the school gate, realized that no necessity to forge ahead was a real handicap, no special opportunity for activity a real cross, to her able but rather retiring friend.

"Something terribly exciting is going to happen to you in three days," she reminded Lucille. "Certainly I mean the party! I believe that ought to jog you out of your rut. Why? My dear, we hear on all sides that it's the event of a lifetime! Lucille, I'm *glad* I'm not going! It'll be good for you to charge along under your own steam, all alone, and pick up some bright ideas without my giant brain to help you. Why do I think you'll pick them up? Dear child, if nobody even knows what the party's to be, who can tell what will happen there?"

"Do you really think something may?" cried Lucille, delighted, and thrilled by Ethel's fine sportsmanship.

"Not," declared Ethel, perversely, "unless you give me one end of that headband this minute, and let me help you get it finished! Unless you look fit to be seen on the great occasion, I tremble to think what may happen!"

CHAPTER VI

FOUR CLUES

"If you'd find a treasure rare,
If to seek one anywhere,
You would dare:

"Come alone on Thursday night,
When the moon is shining bright,
Silver-white,

"Up to Hillcrest garden-gate,
On the very stroke of eight.
(Don't be late!)

"Bring your wits, and find a prize
Which, unseen by careless eyes,
Hidden lies!"

For the last time Lucille laid down Alison's lyrical pink invitation, and passed herself in final review in the mirror, for Thursday evening had arrived.

Yes, she would do! Each fold of her white-tulle skirt, edged with narrow silver-tinsel ribbon, stood out a-glitter; her star

headband shone, so did the silver buckles on her pumps, so, indeed, did her hazel eyes. Alone though she would go to the party, she had never felt readier for any encounter. And what, as Ethel had suggested, might not happen that evening? All she could guess about the mysterious party was that it must consist of some kind of contest, according to the invitation. Splendid! Lucille snatched up her pink fringed shawl, and started in high spirits.

Out into the moonlight she flashed, after an approving family inspection, and up the long, silent block to Hillcrest, the pretty gray Fielding home. It was set in the largest garden in Carleton, and had a beautiful lawn with wide-spreading old trees. As Lucille neared the garden-gate, she could hear no sound but the beating of her heart, and not a soul was in sight. She halted obediently at the gate where she had been directed to come, and waited, wonderingly at first, then apprehensively.

The dim garden was beautifully festive

with Japanese lanterns, and the biggest of all of them hung over the gate, making a wide pool of light all around it. Suddenly in this bright circle appeared a weird and terrifying figure, a giant at least eight feet high,—or maybe nine or ten, Lucille couldn't have told,—strikingly attired in a black-and-white striped coat, long scarlet trousers, and a stovepipe hat. He advanced toward her impressively, though with a caution which hinted at the presence of stilts. Lucille gave a very small shriek, stood her ground, and, after a second glance, greeted the giant with a giggle.

"Goodness, Tom Phillips! What's all this grace and beauty for?"

Tom did not admit his identity at all, but, doubtless encouraged by the compliment, broke forth into poetry.

"I am the treasure's guardian.
Let me explain to you a plan
That is arranged to bring to you
Excitement all the evening through.
You are to hunt a treasure rare,
Locked in a chest that holds it—where?"

"A treasure-hunt!" breathed Lucille, the nature of the party now breaking in on her.

Tom merely changed his meter, as he felt in a pocket.

"Hush! Listen! Hark! List!
Follow this clue to the great mysteree!
And the next, and the next, and the next on the list;
Follow the four, and they'll bring you the key!"

Out of the pocket came an envelope; it was thrust at Lucille, and the giant vanished.

She looked at the envelope under the lantern-light. It was addressed to her. She tore it open. Inside there was a tiny slip of paper, bearing these words:

CLUE No. 1

If you'd be encouraged quite,
And past the worst,
Simply do the first thing right,
The right thing first.

Lucille gaped at these very explicit directions for quite a full minute before an idea as to what they could mean entered her

mind. Then she thought of something that might be worth trying to do, perhaps aided to the decision by ghostly sounds and voices now beginning to be heard in various distant parts of the dim garden, which seemed to make it even less comfortable than it had been when she was alone! Up the garden walk she scurried, on up the porch steps. And lo! her idea was the right one! For the door opened before her!

Into the big foyer bright with lights, charmingly decorated with enormous bunches and long festoons of daisies, Lucille plunged, and straight into Alison's arms. Yet nobody was there besides Alison except her mother, and they both seemed extraordinarily glad to see Lucille, even allowing for the natural cordiality of hostesses.

"At last somebody's guessed that first clue!" cried Alison, in relief. "Mother thought it was too hard to begin with, but she let me have my way!"

"Mother seems to have been right, just once," said Mrs. Fielding, smiling at the

daughter who so obviously was her mother's pet.

"I was right once, too!" pouted Alison. "Here's Lucille."

"Yes, Lucille, you certainly guessed correctly," said Mrs. Fielding. "All our other guests are still in the garden, looking around for that first thing to do."

"I was just lucky; I realized I must come in and speak to you first," laughed Lucille, "though, being so excited, I'm sure I didn't do that 'first thing' very 'right'! Then are all the clues the same for everybody?"

"No, not all; the first is," explained Alison, as she led Lucille to an alcove to take off her shawl. "The others are different, but they're arranged to make crossroads in the hunt sometimes, so the contestants meet occasionally. Of course the winner's the person who solves all his clues the first."

"How jolly! Did you write them all, Alison? How awfully clever of you!" cried Lucille, glancing about for a mirror.

"Oh, not clever—just some work; I'm crazy about writing bad verses, you know," deprecated Alison with unwonted, but not unbecoming, modesty. "You're all right, Lucille; you don't need a looking-glass. How sweet that headband you told me you were making has turned out to be!" She examined the ornament admiringly, bending down Lucille's head to accommodate her own shorter stature.

"Start me hunting, start me hunting!" begged Lucille, hearing eager footsteps, at this juncture, on the porch.

Alison snatched up an envelope from a near-by table as a dozen boys and girls plunged into the foyer, and set up a shriek on finding themselves anticipated by Lucille in the solution of the first clue; then they stared at her curiously, though most amiably.

"You all saw her come in, that's how you got the idea!" Alison teased them, hurrying Lucille away from them. "Hush, not a word! No comments at a treasure-hunt! You just attend to yourselves; finish the

clues you have there. Here, Lucille, take this and go ahead."

She held out the envelope in her hand, and Lucille, withdrawing into a corner, found in it

CLUE No. 2

Now, a rose will lead the way;
And where are the roses, pray?

In the garden, certainly,
Every kind of rose must be!

Maybe; but there's just one kind
Will enable you to find

Treasure that's awaiting you;
Search, and find that hidden clue!

Right among the flowers, indeed,
You will find the rose you need.

This seemed an extremely easy clue to solve. Lucille slipped out again at once into the garden, where one special corner was given up to rose-bushes. She realized it would be too early in the summer for any confusing number of blossoms; certainly,

the one that was to lead the way could soon be found.

But she searched in vain; though there was enough light from lanterns and moon for her to examine the few roses carefully, to her astonishment no sign of a clue appeared. At last she realized unwillingly that she must have leaped to too hasty a conclusion. She repeated the misleading clue slowly:

> "In the garden, certainly,
> Every kind of rose must be.
>
> Maybe; but there's just one kind
> Will enable you to find
>
> Treasure ——"

Lucille thought frantically, much disturbed by the wild screeching of owls up among the tree-tops, a noise which always particularly rasped her nerves. But she held on firmly to a thought that had come to her; if the clue didn't mean what it seemed to, it must mean what it didn't seem to; and in that case ——

"Oh-h-h!" she suddenly exclaimed aloud. "Maybe the rose doesn't have to be in the garden! Of course, there's the wild-rose hedge along by the road."

She scurried toward the gate, and hastily felt her shivering way along the damp hedge, to little purpose. The tiny wild-rose buds were shut up tight in the moonlight, secret and all, if they held any. Baffled at every turn, she once more determinedly repeated her clue, down to the very end:

"Right among the flowers, indeed,
You will find the rose you need."

"'Among the flowers,'" she repeated, looking for them. But grass alone bordered the hedge, on road and garden side alike. At last the truth dawned on her.

"How stupid of me!" thought Lucille. "I guessed it wasn't a regular rose, and not in the garden; well, if it isn't on the hedge, and it is 'among the flowers'——!"

She ran up the walk, and into the bright

foyer again. She heard laughter, good-natured and encouraging, as she came in, but she was too intent on her task to heed it, or to notice more than that the dining-room was full of girls and boys, all, apparently, waiting for something. Through every vase of daisies, through every armful of the gay blossoms massed in the fireplaces; every festoon on wall and banister, she searched, until, at the very end of the quest, in a tiny vase behind a big bowl of daisies beside the dining-room door, she spied a single wild rose!

Under the vase that held it, there was a third envelope; she snatched it up, and heard shouts of congratulation from the dining-room.

"We'd given you up!" cried Ginger, all amiability this evening. "Three cheers!"

"You started first, and now you're last," commented Tom, whose outside duties seemed to be over, as he was seen now to be stalking in and out of the different rooms here on the ground floor, with a watchful

guardian's eye on everything. "You must catch up on the others, Lucille; they're all on the third clue now. I want that treasure found!"

"It's no use to get to the third clue if you stay there!" cried Mary, merrily. "We've all been in this dining-room for ages."

"Is it the first crossroad?" inquired Lucille.

"Yes; maybe it's the last, too!"

Alison burst out laughing, as good-natured and high-spirited as were any of her guests.

"Did you think you were all going to have such an easy time?" she teased. "Cheer up! You're just learning the art of treasure-hunting; all arts, you know, are arduous and long! Take example by Lucille, children; she's one whole clue behind you, and is she down-hearted? No!"

"Maybe she will be if she opens her envelope," suggested Ginger, hopefully.

Amid the shouts which followed this graceful hint, Lucille found in the envelope

CLUE No. 3

In the darkness, find the sun;
It will light your lucky star.
Let this lead you straightway on,
And you'll come where treasures are.

"Stuck!" pronounced Tom, having carefully surveyed Lucille's expression as she read.

"No such thing," denied Lucille stoutly. "There's just one thing for me to do."

"Bluffer!" chided Mary. "That's true for all of us!"

"Then you go ahead, too," advised Lucille; "don't wait for me, please don't! I'll be back, you know!"

The front door closed between her and her half-envious but wholly good-humored competitors, whom Alison, after many would-be helpful hints that got nowhere so far as starting seekers on the trail again went, finally did galvanize into life by suggesting that every one would have to dance and eat sometime in the course of the evening, so why not as soon as possible?

The indoor search started again, in fact, long before Lucille had more than begun her outdoor one. Long did she wander around in the darkness looking for a " sun." It was dark enough, indeed, for one to be visible plainly, for even the moon had now gone temporarily under a cloud; but nothing like the first member of the solar system put in an appearance until Lucille was quite discouraged, almost contemplating retreat. It was just at that juncture that suddenly, above her, the weirdest and most nerve-racking screech of the evening rang out from what had been a dead silence. It was nothing but an owl; but oh, how Lucille longed to run for a warm, bright house, and sympathetic society! Nothing but stubborn pride held her feet to the ground, made her tilt her head casually to see if she could glimpse the owl above her. And there, above her, she saw ——

Just what she was searching for!

How clever Alison was! There on the big lantern on the tree under which Lucille

was standing was the sun itself, the round red sun of the Japanese flag! And above the lantern was a smooth, shining object, with something reflected in it—her own face! And right above the center of her forehead a tiny slip of paper, marked with a downward-pointing arrow, had been stuck into her headband—doubtless when Alison was admiring it. No wonder comments had had to be forbidden! The arrow indicated the large star in the center of the band, on which the " sun " shone most brightly. That must be the lucky star, and it would lead—where?

Lucille pulled out the slip of paper. Adventures were promised by

CLUE NO. 4

Straight on, straight on,
  Whate'er befall!
No dragon fierce,
  No towering wall,
Can e'er alarm,
  Or yet appall,
Or block your way
  At all, at all,

If all your powers
You'll bring indeed
To find the treasure,—
You'll succeed!

Straight on, as she was facing, toward the house! In she ran, and found herself at the second gay meeting of the ways.

This crossroad was the living-room. Beyond it was the library. These two rooms had originally been one very large one, and the present division between them was indicated by book-shelves built out at right angles from opposite side-walls. Most of the guests Lucille had left languishing behind her had at last reached the living-room, and the last two or three came panting in on her heels, fourth clue in hand.

A spirit of intense excitement, and highly good-humored rivalry, now prevailed. Each of the guests, it appeared, had been through the most hair-raising adventures in solving his or her third clue. Lucille and her screech-owl shared the limelight with a shadowy cellar, and a spooky garret, and

a long hall where every board in the floor squeaked, until Lucille began to suspect that that screech-owl must have been very well trained to screech right above the very lantern she was looking for! She was rather glad she had decided not to run.

But the tales of adventures quickly gave place to curiosity, as the guests looked about the living-room. The two bookcases that marked off the library had had the gap between them closed up by large pieces of furniture, while a line of ropes stretched across the top of the barrier from side to side of the room. This, then, was the "towering wall," which, it appeared, was mentioned in all the fourth clues.

"And it's not to stop you!" cried Alison. "Go on, this is the last lap!"

So Lucille found her dragon, the handle of a Chinese jug on top of one of the dividing bookcases, and Mary found the eighth book from the left on one of the top shelves, and others found bits of hardwood in the floor, or figures in the rug, which brought

the company up in line before the wall. But it could not be scaled. The floor gave no suggestion of a way to get under it. Through a tiny gap or two, wistful and unsatisfactory peeps revealed the library empty of all furniture save a table and two chairs. The table was decorated with a prettily embroidered cover hanging to within a few inches of the floor, and held a pile of gay magazines. One of the chairs held the giant, while the other held his stilts, which he seemed glad of a chance to rest.

The library looked in itself so promising as a stronghold for treasure that the whole company began straightway to argue about it, for it appeared that everybody had received the same final hint to disregard the towering wall. But finally somebody said, "If Tom's the treasure's guardian, it's surely there, and he's guarding it."

"He's guardianing it!" cried the irrepressible Tom. "Good work! Come along, folks!"

"But how?" chorused the crowd.

"I never saw anybody so slow as all of you are!" groaned Alison, impatiently.

"We certainly are ashamed; we hang our heads!" declared Mary.

Half the company involuntarily suited the action to the word; and next second, with one accord, half a dozen had flung themselves to the floor! The downward glance had given the clue, and Lucille was among the number to scoop out, from the high bottom section of the bookcase, an armful of books, and to scramble through the towering wall into the library!

Then, almost with a shock, came a sudden halt. For what was there, in the library, to lead on to treasure? Apparently nothing. Table, chairs, magazines, giant—here was where wits would be needed to find the prize!

Silence succeeded wild shrieks, as the last guest scrambled up from the floor. Sharp eyes swept every corner, in vain; and then,—Lucille saw something.

Had somebody just been reading one of the magazines, and marked the place with

a book-mark? Would it be worth while to lose time investigating? She hesitated, she took the chance, and she took it, as she had to, in a single instant. She leaped forward, and snatched the marker; it stuck. She jerked it. It gave, the magazines below it fell to the floor, so did the table-cover, and revealed ——

No table! A wooden chest mounted on two stools! And on the marker still in her hand was tied a long string, on the end of which dangled a tiny brass key!

The crowd surged around her. "The key, the key to the treasure-chest! Open it, open it! Lucille's won the prize!"

"Oh," cried Lucille, "you should have got this, Mary!"

"Nonsense, I never once thought of the marker!" declared Mary. "Open the chest, Lucille! Hurry! What does it matter, as long as the treasure's been found, who found it?"

"It doesn't matter!" cried Alison, as Lucille fitted the key to the chest, and many

willing volunteers helped her raise the heavy lid. "You'll see!"

Her words were lost in a final wild shriek of delight. A fascinating heap of rainbow packages was bursting from the chest, each labeled with a name!

"Everybody's won a prize!" cried Lucille, enchanted with this crowning touch on such a pleasant evening of united industry. "We forgot—it was only the key, really, to which the clues led."

"That's the idea: rewards for every good child that tried, no matter how dumb; and honor for the brightest!" explained Tom, diving into the chest and finding a wonderful purple package, which he presented to Lucille with a most elegant bow, stilts and all. "Ladies and gentlemen! This most deserving young woman has shown that she understands thoroughly all the best principles of hunting treasure! Therefore, on future treasure-hunts, let us all follow her, if we cannot beat her!"

CHAPTER VII

A NEW ROUND TABLE

But though Lucille herself did not know it that evening, she had reaped a bigger reward from the treasure-hunt than even the honor of finding the key.

The splendid excitement and fun had jolted her out of her every-day round of thoughts; she seemed brighter and happier than she had for a long time, and to Ethel, who noticed her improved spirits, she admitted she felt freshly started for coming days. But the real reason for her new energy was an idea that had presented itself to her the day following the party, when its remembrance was freshest with her: an idea so amazing, that seemed to turn, of its own accord, into such a dazzling plan, that Lucille could just barely command enough prudence to let it rest in her mind a few days, and prove its worth, before she told it.

Several days after the treasure-hunt, she and Ethel were spending another sunny afternoon on Battery Cape, this time knitting new sweaters, a blue one for Lucille, a green one for Ethel. This was not a lively occupation, perhaps; but nothing in Carleton was lively, just now particularly. Indeed, the abandonment of the anniversary project had cast a sort of blight over the town. But though young and old were alike disappointed, general opinion was that under the circumstances nothing else could have been done.

But Ethel, especially by contrast with most other people, now seemed to be more energetic and lively than ever, as she sat knitting and chattering away; and Lucille, after a few minutes, told her so.

"Oh, I'm going stronger than ever!" cried Ethel. "I'm not going to pay any attention to other people. Dick and I have formed a bond on the subject of no celebration, you see. He says it's the last straw, and agrees with me that while we'll do

everything possible to improve ourselves and everything else, we'll look elsewhere than in this town for thrills."

"Do you know," ventured Lucille, slowly purling away on a long blue row, "I can't help wondering if you—and, indeed, most of us—don't make a mistake in assuming that you've got to do that."

"What do you mean?"

"Ethel, do you remember when we were here the other day, that you suggested that all of us needed a fresh start?"

"I said you and I did."

"Yes, and we've each had ours. But you said the whole town did, too. Ethel,"—Lucille hesitated so long that her friend looked up at her curiously,—"I think I've thought of a way for all us girls and boys, at least, to have one! Wouldn't that be thrilling?"

"Where did you ever get such an idea?" cried Ethel.

Lucille tried to look surprised at the question, but only succeeded in looking mis-

chievous, as she answered: "Why, at the party, of course. Didn't you say I would?"

"Go along, you can't tease me!" said Ethel.

"It's the truth. Don't you want to hear the idea?"

"I wanted to make you ask me if I didn't want to! I'm just crazy to!"

"Then I'll tell you ——"

"Oh, bother, you'll have to tell Smarty Mason, too," murmured Ethel, glancing toward the road. "He was away down on the beach, headed for home, but he saw us, and the attraction was too great. Here he comes."

"I don't mind," declared Lucille; "it would be rather good to get two such different opinions on this queer idea of mine."

Smarty now bounded down the cape, and flung himself on the grass.

"Where've you been?" asked Lucille, after greetings had been exchanged.

"To borrow a book."

"What is it?"

"'*Famous Pirate-Fighters.*' Looks nice, doesn't it?"

Smarty displayed a handsome volume, well illustrated, and evidently crammed with exciting lore.

"Where'd you get it?" inquired Ethel.

"Will Blair said I might go to his house and borrow it for to-night."

"Will Blair?"

"Yes. It isn't his; it's from the library in Hallett. He goes there every other Saturday to read, because there's no library here; and they let him bring books all the way home here, because he's a responsible boy."

"He certainly is," agreed Lucille. "He's the best boy to his family I ever saw, with his father sick so long, and not able to work much even yet, and so many younger children."

"It's a perfect shame he's so poor," said Ethel.

"Well, I'll tell you one thing, and it's not two," observed Smarty with an air of vast

experience. "A boy like Will doesn't stay poor, if you want my opinion."

The two girls giggled, and Lucille said: "That's just what I do want, Robert: your opinion, and Ethel's. I want to ask you both what you think of an idea of mine. If you think it's good, tell me; and tell me if you don't think so. I want to know, really, because I think maybe it's a useful idea."

"Go on," urged the audience.

"I think," began Lucille, "that everybody is terribly upset about the trouble we've made for the town."

"We?" Smarty picked her up.

"Everybody in school," said Lucille firmly. "Some people made trouble by doing things, and some by not doing things. I see now that keeping away from a fight won't always stop it ——"

"Neither will getting into one," observed Smarty, the truculent one, pensively.

"And so," smiled Lucille, "I think it's for us young people to show we're sorry for the bad spirit that has made so many divi-

sions, and so much hard feeling, and to show it all together."

"How could we?" asked Ethel.

"We should do something, I think, that would prove to the general public that we are not quite so terrible as is believed!"

"Yes?"

"So I thought this might be a way of doing it: we can all get together and celebrate our anniversary, as a patriotic demonstration."

"But ——"

"Just wait, both of you. I know the official celebration's off. But the town council never said—it couldn't say—that *nobody* must celebrate ——"

"No!"

"And everybody feels so disappointed —"

"Yes!"

"That if we young people could unite and have an *unofficial* celebration, why wouldn't it be all right?"

The brilliance of this really simple idea seemed staggering; but certainly Lucille

was not long kept in doubt as to whether or not her plan had been favorably received.

Smarty, with the first breath he could manage, gave a long, ecstatic whistle; and Ethel gave her friend a frantic hug.

"Dear, clever Lucille," she cried, "to think of being 'unofficial'! Why, we all are unofficial—we'll just be natural, and nobody can stop us! I must say that this time you have an idea!"

"How are you going to carry it out?" demanded Smarty, fixing Lucille with fierce and flattering attention. "Have you a plan?"

"I have."

"Tell it, tell it!"

"Now, just wait a minute, you two impatient things!" teased Lucille, casting a roving eye over the docks below the cape. "I wanted you to tell me if the idea was good. Now, I want some other people, too, to tell me if the plan is good! It's very important to have all sorts of views on this mighty plan. And I see Dick and Will

Blair coming in with one of the fishing-boats. So, with your permission, I suggest inviting them to come up here and form a Round Table."

"Oh, Dick'll be crazy to come! I'll call him," cried Ethel; and, leaping up on one of the long black cannon, she immediately directed a piercing summons at a distant figure in plaid "lumberjack" and hip-boots, which was just climbing over the side of a motor-boat on to the dock.

Dick raised his head, saw her, and nodded. She shrieked a cheerful and pressing invitation to Will, also, and a second figure, in an old blue sweater and knitted cap, and big boots, accompanied Dick's up the hill. As the two approached, a fishing-basket slung over Will's shoulder gave out a particularly fresh, vigorous odor which suggested that he was taking home supper for a large and hungry family.

Dick greeted the girls amiably, and hailed Smarty with condescending good-humor.

"Hello, girls! Hello, kid! You wanted me, Ethel?"

"Lucille wants you both. In fact, she wants all four of us."

"What's up?"

"Sit down, and we'll tell you," urged Lucille.

Dick obediently bestrode the cannon at the end of the semicircle opposite the one which was the girls' favorite, and Will leaped up on the central one of the battery, which was sunk the most deeply into the ground. The five young folks, sitting thus in the afternoon sunshine above the dashing blue sea, did indeed form a modern type of Round Table, as Lucille had quaintly suggested. If they were preparing to go forth and do battle for an ideal, they had members quite as gallant-looking as were those of the original group.

"All set, let her go!" urged Dick.

Lucille repeated briefly her idea that the boys and girls in the town should do something for it. For the second time this was

well received, and she launched forth, encouraged by sympathy, on her "plan" in which one and all were to have a share.

"I've thought a great deal about this. It seems to me that we have enough people in the school to get up a pretty good series of historical tableaux, showing how fine our town really has been, and how different from other places. It is, you know," insisted Lucille, loyally.

"Sure!" agreed her audience. "That ought to make a good show."

"And the idea ought to be popular if it's Lucille's," declared Ethel; "after the success she had the other night, everybody will listen to her. And tableaux aren't hard to do."

"We can't do anything very hard," admitted Lucille, with a touch of chagrin.

"No," agreed Dick; "in fact, Lucille, I don't want to discourage you,—I'm absolutely for this thing, you know,—but ——"

"But what, Dick? Please do say what you think."

"Well, there are such a lot of dubs in that school, I don't think you can ever get up a show yourself."

"Oh, I never even thought of trying to!" laughed Lucille. "But I did think of some one who would help us, and that's Miss Page."

"Surest thing you know!" cried Dick, satisfied.

"She'll do it!" chimed in Will.

"After we busted up her other program?" inquired Smarty, doubtfully, with cold reason, indeed, if without great tact.

Lucille hastened to the rescue.

"If we're sorry, and want to do better, Miss Page is certainly the last person who would refuse to help us," she declared; "especially as she's so fond of entertainments, as we know. Now, since we're all in agreement, what about asking her to-morrow if we can have some sort of celebration?"

"Sh-h-h!"

Dick's warning came suddenly. His posi-

tion commanded the road, and a jerk of his head caused four other heads to jerk quickly in the same direction. Then they jerked back, for Judge Trenholm was pacing slowly along the road, stern and solitary. In a minute Dick gave another signal, indicating that the judge was now out of earshot. He then said earnestly: "I didn't mean to interrupt, but we don't want him to hear us talking about any celebration, even a little unofficial one, until it's settled that we can have it, do we? He's the old grouch that stopped the original one, remember?"

"And yet," said Lucille, gently, "he's our leading citizen; surely he must be proud of the town! Father told me just the other day that the judge is writing a history of Carleton for the State archives—think of it!"

"Yes; he has the only real library in town," rejoined Dick, bitterly, glancing at Will and Smarty. For the little boy was displaying his pirate book to the big one, to show he had it, as agreed. "And there the

judge sits all day, except when he goes to council meetings to say progressive people sha'n't have a chance here!"

Lucille, continuing her gentle manner, made another effort for peace.

"You know," she remarked, reflectively, "I've been wondering about the judge, and his queer crossness. Do you suppose he could possibly believe in that old town superstition ——"

"About the silver plaque?"

"Why, yes, Dick. I didn't know you knew the story."

"Ethel told me. She says Smarty told you and her."

"And I see Will knows, too!"

"Dick told me, Lucille."

"Things get around, don't they?" smiled Lucille.

"They certainly do," agreed Ethel. "Curiously enough, I've heard that plaque story mentioned, by other people than ourselves, at least twice since I heard it for the first time the other day. But everybody

seems to think it's rather unpopular, especially with the older people here."

"I wonder," mused Lucille, "if the judge really does believe that Carleton lost out when it lost its mascot?"

"That's just what people say," confirmed Ethel.

"I think maybe he's just specially discouraged since he lost his son," suggested Will.

A brief, respectful silence fell over his companions; for they all remembered that the school-yard tree next the one marked "Ralph Trenholm" bore the name of "Henry Blair." The war, vague and dim as it seemed, had left its scar on Will's family. Had his eldest brother lived, Will would not have had to face the struggle he met so bravely. Perhaps he understood the cross old judge better than did his happier comrades.

"Well, at all events," declared Lucille in a moment, with merry decision, "we can't wait for the plaque to turn up to start some-

thing in Carleton. Suppose it took forty years more! Shall we talk to Miss Page to-morrow?"

"You girls talk," decreed Dick.

"That would be better," said Ethel, crushingly.

"I can talk," observed Smarty, with overwhelming truth.

"Then, let's do this," laughed Ethel. "Let's all talk up the plan with the other girls and boys, and if we find people want it, what about Lucille and me seeing Miss Page after school?"

"That's the ticket!" cried Dick and Will and Smarty, and the Round Table session was adjourned with loud whoops of triumph.

CHAPTER VIII

CONFIDENCES

When four o'clock struck next afternoon, Lucille and Ethel had been sitting on the stairs outside Miss Page's door for one whole hour.

No small interest had been expressed throughout the school, when Lucille's idea of holding a celebration had been broached. There seemed to be a general feeling of relief at the possible prospect of some activity. Some of the older students had merely asked questions; a few, Alison among them, had said nothing whatever; but others, among them the enthusiastic Tom, had quite dazed Lucille by their praise of her plan, and had even received Ethel back into favor because she would be an excellent person to accompany Lucille on the visit to Miss Page. So altogether the girls felt quite encouraged,

and undertook to perform their task of seeing Miss Page at the first possible moment.

But never before had she seemed so busy. At dismissal she had rushed to the principal's office, and stayed there a long time. Then she had visited another teacher, also a long time. Then she had gone straight into her own classroom, and shut the door.

That was now a quarter of an hour ago, and the two watchers on the stairs were beginning to wonder if a plan presented so late in the day would be very acceptable, when the door of the classroom opened slowly, and Camilla Caro came out.

No, was it really Camilla? Could that downcast, weeping little girl really be their usually merry, vivacious companion? Oblivious of her two astounded comrades on the stairs, she hurried down the hall, trying to stifle her sobs; and though the girls started quickly after her, her footsteps broke into a run, and she fled before them down the walk to the gate. They stared at each other in dismay.

"She was waiting in Miss Page's room all that time," said Lucille.

"What can have happened?" puzzled Ethel. "It must be something bad. Do you remember the other day, when we met her on the road, and she looked so upset then, too?"

"Yes. I wonder if we ought to see Miss Page, now?"

"I think so, Lucille. We promised to. It's our business, and I suppose poor Camilla's troubles aren't, really."

This time the girls found Miss Page's door open. But what a strange Miss Page was correcting papers at the desk—pale and sunken-eyed, almost with the sparkle gone from her red-gold hair! She looked up without even attempting a smile.

"Did you forget something?" she asked.

Ethel felt it was of great importance to present the new matter most interestingly.

"No," she said briskly, "we've been waiting to see you. We've something perfectly wonderful to tell you!"

Her unquenchable enthusiasm did strike a faint answering spark. Miss Page laid her pencil down, and invited: "Very well, sit down and tell me."

"Lucille must do that; it's her idea," said Ethel, loyally.

"It's everybody's idea now, I guess," smiled Lucille. "Maybe you've been so busy to-day, Miss Page, that you haven't heard that the school would like so much to celebrate the Carleton anniversary,—simply and informally, of course; but we can't bear to let it pass unnoticed."

Miss Page looked grave.

"I did hear some of the older students talking about that. I didn't understand it was a general wish throughout the school, though. So it's Lucille's idea?"

"Yes," admitted Lucille modestly, "and so people thought perhaps I could explain it to you best, especially if Ethel came along to help me."

"Of course," Ethel helped her out at once, "we know we can't get up a celebra-

tion all by ourselves; but you can, Miss Page."

Miss Page's bewildering gravity changed to a smile.

"Drones must die when Ethel's around! I'm touched and flattered that you should want my help. Of course, Mr. Lowrie must make the final decision as to whether you may hold a celebration or not, but I think he'd favor a suitable one, provided there is, as you say, a general wish to hold it."

"Nobody could stop him, I hope?" suggested Ethel, anxiously.

"No," smiled Miss Page; "he has full authority over such matters in the school. Now, let's hear details of this plan. How did you come to think of it, and what do you want to do?"

The girls explained everything fully. Miss Page listened sympathetically, evidently impressed. She liked the idea of presenting historical tableaux, and agreed that such a program could be presented attractively and without great difficulty in the

school assembly-room, and by a small group of inexperienced performers.

"There've been lots of fine suggestions for adding to the tableaux," Ethel told her. "Some people think there ought to be speeches with them, explaining them, to make them more interesting. And some say, why not have appropriate recitations? They do want to show they can recite, after all, I think!"

"And some of them think it would be a good time to organize a school band, for there are enough people that play, you know, so we could have some music, too," continued Lucille. "And there really is a general wish, Miss Page, to show that we can sing choruses, as well as recite!"

"Oh, listen!" cried Ethel, suddenly struck by an idea. "Why couldn't we have some solos from our best singers, like Camilla Caro, for instance? She has a beautiful voice ——"

She broke off. Almost with a groan, her face again as distracted as when the girls

had entered the room, Miss Page fell back in her chair.

"Oh, my dear child," she sighed, "Camilla won't be here for any celebration! She's going to leave school."

The girls were thunderstruck.

"Leave school?" they both repeated, dazedly. "But she's not fourteen yet. She's planning to graduate; not only that, but to go on to normal school to take the primary teachers' course. What's happened?"

Miss Page's face again had that queer, grave expression. She returned: "You know Camilla's father, don't you?"

The girls nodded. Lucille said: "He brings Mother our vegetables—we haven't much garden-space, you know. Such nice fresh green stuff as he always has! And he's always so pleasant."

"I like Mr. Caro," said Miss Page, gently; "I admire him, too. Think, girls! He came four thousand miles, alone, with a few dollars, to this country, and in a few

years he had a nice little home and a good business. How many of us could do that? Only the brave spirits, I think. But he has had a hard life, too. Once he told me that he had worked since he was nine years old, and never learned even to read and write until he attended a free night school in this country. None of us can judge everything wisely; and I understand how he finds it hard to realize that every American girl today needs a very good education. He has already given Camilla what must seem like a great deal to him. She has fulfilled the State requirements; next week she'll be fourteen, and can work legally. So her father wants her to leave school, and go and work in the store, where she can make seven dollars a week."

"Work in the store!" cried Ethel, who had been listening in fascinated horror. "But she would be the most ideal teacher for little children, and if she'd wait a little while, she'd make more money teaching, if money's what she wants, than she ever would

working in that store. Lucille, don't you remember the Hawleys? Why, Miss Page, one day last week Lucille and I met Camilla on the road in front of that terrible Hawley house, and the children just ran out and mobbed her, they loved her so! Work in the store—nonsense!"

Lucille made a despairing gesture.

"Ethel, she was coming out of that store when we first saw her! She was all dressed up—she'd been to apply for a position! No wonder she seemed to act queerly!"

"Isn't it a pity," suggested Miss Page, sorrowfully, "that some of the people who claim to be the very best citizens here have actually handicapped a great many little children, who won't have Camilla teach them, now?"

"Was it,"—murmured Lucille, profoundly shocked,—"oh, it *wasn't* ——"

"Yes," nodded Miss Page, "it was the trouble over the flag that made Mr. Caro change his mind. Camilla had just managed to persuade him to let her go on studying;

and when he thought that other students looked down on her, he decided she'd better leave school and make some money. Seven dollars a week seems like a great deal to get all at once, when you've spent years saving up pennies, Ethel. So Camilla is leaving. And that isn't all,—or, perhaps, the worst."

"What's worse?" demanded Ethel, resolutely.

"Certainly you two girls can realize what bad feeling her leaving under such circumstances will create among her parents' friends—the families whom we sometimes know as humble, but whose work is what largely keeps the town going. We are not a united town, alas, and this trouble threatens to make division of groups even worse."

Lucille was speechless with regret, and on the verge of tears. Ethel, however, after a minute's reflection, energetically broke the silence that followed Miss Page's conclusion.

"I see now why Camilla ran home cry-

ing," she said. "We saw her when we were waiting on the stairs for you, Miss Page. We tried to help her, but couldn't. Of course she still wants to go on studying?"

"Oh, yes. But Mr. Lowrie has seen her father, so has Camilla's class teacher, as she has just told me; and I have seen her mother, who works for mine every week, and none of us can do anything for Camilla. I had to tell her so."

"When is she going to leave?"

"At the end of this week."

Ethel thought a moment. "Miss Page, could you, do you think, possibly persuade her father to let her finish the year out?"

"I might; that's only about three weeks, of course." Miss Page looked rather more surprised at the idea than doubtful. "I suppose he might give her that satisfaction, if there were any good reason for it."

"Well, I think there is," declared Ethel. "If Camilla's here when we have the celebration, and has a very good part,—which, of course, she'd deserve, being so pretty and

charming and musical,—she'd make a big hit, and that would impress her father. He might think school was a good thing after all, and change his mind again!"

"A shrewd idea!" commented Miss Page, evidently impressed with it. "Ethel, I believe I'll try it. Also, first thing to-morrow, I'll find out if we can have the celebration. But don't expect an answer in a hurry; for, if Mr. Lowrie thinks the suggestion's good, he may want time to consider it."

"Oh, we can wait, if we can only have it!" declared Lucille. "And do you think we can? Won't that be wonderful!"

"It will be wonderful," replied Miss Page, quite seriously, "only if the celebration is carried out in the right spirit. Everybody may want to be a patriot, but everybody will have to be an unselfish, thoughtful, tolerant patriot if the undertaking is to succeed. Otherwise it will be a complete failure."

"I do think," said Lucille, sincerely, "that there are lots of boys and girls here

who want to improve in every way, and help the town along, Miss Page."

"I don't doubt it, my dear; you and Ethel represent just such a group. But I only want you to remember that such progressive people must always be prepared for opposition from those who are satisfied with conditions as they are. You may have to work hard to win the opposition over, don't you see? However, I see you two are not to be stopped at the start, anyway! Ethel's good, practical suggestion may help to head off entirely both Camilla's threatened difficulty, and also the bad town situation which may arise out of it."

"I'd never have thought of the idea," declared Ethel, modestly, "if Lucille hadn't been so set on us all becoming reformed characters!"

And at that, as the sweetest crowning touch for the afternoon's exchange of confidences, Miss Page broke out laughing in her own gay, hearty manner.

"There's simply no telling where Lucille

may end, if she keeps on!" she cried. "We'll not expect too plain sailing, then, girls, but we will expect to succeed! I will do everything I can to help you if the celebration's approved. I promise!"

"Oh, thank you!" cried both girls, gratefully. "It'll have to be a success, if you help us!"

"Flatterers! Run along! Shoo!" cried Miss Page, most ungratefully. "I've papers to correct!"

CHAPTER IX

ALISON'S SCHEME

"HAVE you heard, have you heard the news?"

Mildred Wrenn, shrieking the question excitedly, came tearing down to the school gate to meet Lucille, as the latter came in after recess the next day. The last time Mildred had raced along that path so swiftly had been the sad occasion of the tree exercises. But this time her speed was certainly due to high spirits, not shaking nerves. Something extraordinary must have happened.

"What's up?" asked Lucille, who had been home to lunch.

"Your plan for a celebration is approved!"

"Not already!"

"Yes, Mr. Lowrie's very enthusiastic! But he thinks it must be made a worth-

while celebration; he wants the scenes and recitations and songs made into a pageant, and Miss Page says she will help us fix it that way."

"Isn't that gorgeous?" cried Ethel, dashing up. "And he wants us to give it on the last day of school."

"That's only three weeks off!" exclaimed Lucille. "How one little idea can grow in no time at all! And does everybody still like it?"

"If they don't, you don't hear them say so," laughed Ethel.

"Won't it be exciting planning everything,—the scenes, especially, and the —— Oh, Tom Phillips!" cried Lucille, rebukingly, flapping at that light-hearted youth a hand she had been flapping vigorously at the back of her neck. "Go away!"

For Tom, exhilarated by the good news, had crept up behind her a moment or two ago, unseen, armed with an early spear of timothy-grass, and was tickling her neck from behind a tree, in the hope that she

might think herself the prey of a most persistent fly. Being invited to depart, he of course remained, being favorably inclined to her idea, anyway.

"Well! Some news!" observed Tom, approvingly. "But how're we going to pull it off—a pageant, I mean? That's what these people don't think of, you know. These plays and things have to be written, specially if they're historic; you can't make that kind up out of your head. Where're we going to find out about these historical scenes—whether they're true or not, don't you know? And suppose we can't think of enough, ourselves? Say, listen ——"

"I don't know just what else we're doing," remarked Ethel, caustically.

"Miss Page has some job ahead of her," continued Tom, not discouraged; "I heard her say so, coming out of that meeting the teachers had to talk the plan over. She didn't care who heard her. She said: 'If I only could get the books! But unless I can think of some good way to ask Judge Tren-

holm in the present circumstances'—— I lost the rest. But ——"

"What was it she said?" asked several voices.

Tom, in due turn, had been overtaken by his own crowd. They—Alison, Ginger, Mary, all the rest of the older students—had been chatting near by, and now strolled over to the gate to see what kept Tom from them. He repeated what he had been telling the three girls.

"Well," said Ethel, with her usual good practical sense, "I see what we can do. It's really quite simple. Why don't *we* ask Judge Trenholm to help us?"

"What an idea!" gasped Alison, actually surprised into conversation with Ethel once more.

"What's the matter with it?" inquired Ethel, most politely.

"My dear child, don't you know how cross he is, poor old thing?" intervened Mary, gently, before Alison could reply. Alison did, indeed, look quite pettish.

"He'd turn us down flat, if he didn't fly into a rage and eat us alive first, you may be quite sure."

Even the loquacious Tom, not to mention the rest of the older crowd present, seemed quite staggered by Ethel's foolhardiness. They merely nodded mutely, in agreement with Mary. But Mildred had the sharp, lively tongue that so often accompanies a gay red head, and she didn't like Mary, who was always *so* sweet, and she was much vexed with Judge Trenholm because it was her own breakdown in reciting that had caused that fastidious old gentleman to leave the tree exercises. She, therefore, rallied to Ethel's aid.

"I think it would be fine to ask the judge!" she burst out. "His big library would be the greatest help to us in choosing the pageant scenes, of course. He couldn't possibly refuse to help us! Nonsense! The biggest man in town refuse to help a lot of us that want to do something patriotic? Do talk sense!"

"I'll ask him," observed a new voice. "I'm not afraid."

"Well, who's afraid, Smarty Mason?" demanded Ginger, addressing in strong exasperation his spectacled young friend who had made his way well into the crowd. "Butting in again, are you, eh?"

"Then if nobody's afraid, are we going to ask him?" inquired Smarty, placidly.

"Listen! I think it would be grand to ask him. Some fun, eh?" cried Tom, suddenly won to the prospect of such an amusing encounter, and so much probably sparkling conversation ensuing from it. "Why don't we elect a committee on scenes, and send it to call on him? Listen! Why can't we have a school meeting this afternoon, and elect a committee of, say, six people, and arrange for them to call on the judge?"

"He'd refuse to see them," declared Alison, scornfully.

"Not if we ask him the right way," declared Tom, more and more taken with his idea. "Listen! Let's ask Miss Page to

ask him to see us. She knows him well, and he likes her."

"I think that's a perfectly splendid idea," approved Lucille.

"Then come on," cried Tom, turning in her direction from that of his most unsympathetic friends, "and let's go in and find her and Mr. Lowrie and talk to them and make arrangements! This is going to be some fun!"

He darted off, and Lucille and Ethel and Mildred, escorted by Smarty, went too.

Alison, much rebuffed, drew her circle closely around her.

"Well, I think ——" she began.

"That Tom Phillips is a nut," finished Ginger, wrathfully. He picked up a small feather from the ground, and blew it off through the air. "He's got just as much weight as that! Anywhere he can mix into something and 'make arrangements,' he'll go, the big chump! Is he loyal to this bunch, or anything, I ask you? And as for his idea of that committee ——"

"That's a good idea," interrupted Alison, in turn, firmly, "provided the right people are on the committee ——"

"Oh, I see!" A great light broke over Ginger. "If they are, we can take hold of things and run the whole show, eh? Well, I take back ——"

"No, that's not it. If the right people are on the committee, we can stop the show."

"Stop the show!" cried Ginger, accompanied by a chorus of loud gasps. "What do you want to do that for?"

"Because once it gets going, we'll have nothing whatever to say about it. Our crowd will be swamped, if everybody in the place has a part in the pageant, as will be the case. It won't be a bit representative of real Carleton people, so I say we don't want it," explained Alison with absolute conviction.

Alison's friends were used to accepting her ideas, for she was the one member of the group who had a really good mind and whose standing in her work was very high.

A number of them, moreover, while rather tempted by the allurements of the proposed celebration, had secretly shared her fears that it would be too all-embracing for the best taste. A certain hesitant silence that greeted the conclusion of her speech showed that it had had some effect, and she followed that up at once.

"You see, we ought to keep up our standards. These new people that are coming into everything can't possibly understand them. Don't you believe that? Well, then, it'll be easy enough just to nip this celebration right in the bud, and have no more trouble. We can just decide who's to be on the committee to visit the judge."

"I see what you mean," said Ginger; "we can elect ourselves, and then ——"

"How can you be so dumb, Ginger!" Alison stamped a small foot with great vigor. "Why, the judge would give *us* anything! But if we send a committee not to his liking, he wouldn't help them at all, and the pageant would be off!"

This strategy was in its way masterly, and Alison had a good deal of force. Her discontented audience rallied to her, with the exception of Ginger, who glanced around unhappily until his eye lighted on Mary, who had said nothing so far.

"What do you think?" he asked her. "Think it's better to stop the show than to have it and run it?"

"I think certainly we ought to control things," said Mary, with an earnestness that was most convincing. "But how could we fix that committee, Alison? That is something to be thought of."

"Decide what people we want, now, and get enough votes to elect them," answered Alison, promptly. "We've a big enough majority in the upper school to control the meeting. And Tom will preside, of course. Mr. Lowrie will tell him to, because he's such a chuckleheaded goose that everybody likes him,—I mean, Tom is,—so that, after all, ought to help get what we want. Now, who'll we have?"

"That dratted little Smarty," proposed Ginger, instantly.

"Good idea! The judge won't like him. Let's have Dick Merriam, too," suggested Alison, perhaps as an olive branch after her belligerence.

Ginger and his friends received this nomination favorably, and then some one suggested that Will Blair was one of the "new ones" that the judge didn't think much of, either. Then Mary pointed out that it would be wise if there were an equal number of girls on the committee.

"And don't fill it with freaks," she warned; "if it's too terrible, it won't be elected. You'll have to put Lucille Douglas on it, or somebody else will; she's been so popular ever since she thought of holding the celebration."

"All right."

"And Camilla Caro."

"Oh, no!"

"See here, Alison, give somebody else a show about running something!" urged

Ginger, restively. "You've got to get this ticket in; all the kids will vote for Camilla."

"Certainly," nodded Mary, with a sweet smile at Ginger; "that will bring in the other nominees, don't you see, Alison?"

"Well, the judge won't like *her,*" declared Alison. "And whom shall we have for the third girl?"

"Why, you, of course!" replied Mary. "Don't all of you say so? Alison will be such a contrast to most of that committee! I'm afraid most of them will be embarrassed, finding themselves in Judge Trenholm's house; but Alison—well! *She* doesn't get nervous—much. Of course we must show the judge we have some good people here."

This was considered a fine plan, with Alison modestly deprecating her abilities.

"I'll just be—well, different," she announced. "The judge will see. Mary, you must help me plan what to do. Now, come on in, folks, and let's get votes."

So in this obedient and united group of friends went, and there found the feather-

brained Tom dancing from room to room, posting a notice of a meeting to be held after dismissal. He was, as had been predicted, to preside; and he did so duly, and very well. And the six names that had been selected in the corner of the school-yard proved to be the highest six on the ballot, for, undistinguished as some of their owners were, they all seemed to possess, for some reason, numerous friends who had been quite willing to vote for them.

And so Lucille and Camilla and Alison, and Dick and Will and Smarty, constituted the committee on scenes for the pageant, and a proud and pleased committee they were. Only after Miss Page came back from the telephone with the cheerful message: "Judge Trenholm will meet the committee on scenes to-morrow afternoon at half-past three!" did the responsibility of their task occur to them. And then they looked at each other, and more than one of their comrades looked at all of them, and wondered dubiously how this unprecedented

scheme of approaching a severe old gentleman with such a diverse group of young people, to get help on such an important matter, was, after all, going to turn out?

CHAPTER X

A DRAGON AT HOME

THERE was nothing to do, however, but go through with the plan. Accordingly the next afternoon saw the committee, all except Alison, who was to join them on the road, climbing slowly up the hill toward the judge's mansion. By this time, from high pride they had fallen into a low state of depression and gloom, which even Miss Page's presence, insisted on by the whole six, could not change into confidence. The judge's reputation was too much.

It was a relief, therefore, to see, up the road, a vigorous figure swinging toward them from the top of the bluff, especially as it was that of the popular Captain Jim, with his binoculars swung around his neck.

"Whither away?" came his hail.

"To call on Judge Trenholm!" cried Smarty, with a burst of relief, and a realiza-

tion that this was quite a striking announcement.

"Great sea-serpents' tails!" ejaculated the captain. "How's that?"

"He invited us!"

"Hey?"

"That's right!"

"We're going to have an anniversary celebration, at school!"

"We are the committee on scenes, and the judge is going to help us choose good ones, out of his books—we hope!"

Not to be outdone by Smarty in making sensational announcements were the other members of the committee! Captain Jim staggered most dramatically, and demanded full particulars.

"Best news I've heard in a month of Sundays!" he declared. "You young folks can make us sit up yet,—while the head, the hand, and the heart rule together, I'll say you can! Going to let famous old ruins like me, for instance, come and see the show?"

"Of course!" giggled the committee,

quite heartened by the enthusiasm which could suggest a production good enough for an outside audience.

"I'll be there, then; and I'll bring along these here glasses,"—Captain Jim flourished the binoculars,—"which is all the specs my young eyes need, even yet, so's not to miss a thing!"

"Have you been sighting ships from the bluff?" asked Will, who knew the old man's favorite recreation.

"Yes; it's so clear, I saw six steamers eastbound."

"Was the *Algonquin* one of them?" demanded Smarty.

Dick and Will administered discreet shoves on hearing this ill-considered allusion to Ben Porter's ship, but the captain merely nodded quietly, and gave an involuntary glance at the eastern horizon. There, on the shining edge, was a tiny black dot.

"Oh, let me look at her, too!" begged the irrepressible Robert. Captain Jim obligingly handed over the binoculars, and finally

the small lad remembered that he had some manners. "Miss Page, want to take a look?" he inquired politely.

Miss Page took the glasses he held out, and gazed through them for quite a long time.

"Very clear," she said, finally, passing back the binoculars. "You can see the yellow stripes on the smokestack quite plainly."

"Headed for England, isn't she, Captain?" inquired Smarty, his eyes glued to the lenses. "And her turn-around takes nearly three weeks, doesn't it? So she'll be coming back ——"

"Give somebody else a chance at those glasses, kid," interposed Will, good-naturedly; "we've got business ahead."

So after every one had had a glimpse of the distant graceful vessel, the committee moved on toward a white-pillared house visible on the summit of the cliff. The boys raced for the gate, but Lucille and Camilla lingered for Alison, who was coming down the steps of her house to the road.

"Oh! I never thought to get dressed up," murmured Camilla.

"Miss Page would have told us to, if we should have," returned Lucille, glancing down at her businesslike school frock with confidence.

Alison, however, had got dressed up, after a consultation with Mary, who dwelt on the fact that good clothes certainly did prevent nervous self-consciousness. She wore a Sundayfied blue silk frock, and her best silver-link bracelet. As she approached, she smiled affably at the two other girls.

"Are you scared?" she inquired, falling into step.

"I oughtn't to be," answered Lucille, truthfully; "the judge knows my father well."

"Mine, too," agreed Alison; "and we're such near neighbors that I don't feel a bit nervous, myself. How about you, Camilla?"

"Oh, my father knows the judge so well he sees him every day," answered Camilla, dimpling, and skipping over three puddles

in the road. "The judge is awfully particular, you know; he always comes and picks out his own vegetables from my father's cart!"

She skipped over two more puddles with unusual gayety, and ran after Miss Page.

Alison put her nose into the air, and had nothing much more to say as she and Lucille walked the short distance to Judge Trenholm's house. She had no comment to offer on Camilla other than a superior, contemptuous little giggle such as Lucille had heard from her on more than one previous occasion when she wished to express special disapproval. Alison had a tendency to get rather nervous when she was irritated, and to use this giggle instead of spoken comment. What a goose she was just now, thought Lucille, and what a perfect dear Camilla was!

At the gate the two girls found Miss Page giving some final advice and encouragement.

"Since you've all been invited, be yourselves, remembering, of course, that you are

guests, and that your host doesn't act just the way younger people do."

"Avoid arguments," suggested Smarty, with great solemnity.

"That's the idea; we must make everything go off as smoothly as possible," smiled Miss Page. "If the judge should ask many questions, as all lawyers are apt to do, just be patient, and answer them all. His doing so will really just show his interest in you and your work."

In a moment the judge's gray-haired housekeeper, who had looked after him since his wife's death, long ago, had ushered the party into the great library. There sat Judge Trenholm, at his big mahogany desk facing the fireplace, surrounded by bookshelves reaching from floor to ceiling. The room was handsomely furnished, the polished floor was covered with thick rugs. Over the fireplace hung two likenesses of Ralph Trenholm, the judge's son.

The young people remembered him only dimly, as a big, lively boy who always used

to whistle, and make what seemed to be the most amusing jokes in the world. One picture was an enlarged snapshot, showing Ralph at fourteen, in baseball togs; the other was a fine photograph of him wearing the uniform in which he had fallen, five years later, in France.

The judge rose, motioned the visitors to seats, and spoke a courtly if rather frigid word of greeting to Miss Page. There was a rather awful silence for a minute; and then Judge Trenholm inquired, "May I ask you why you have chosen to honor me with this visit?"

He flung the question at Smarty, whom chance had placed in an armchair opposite the desk, so deep that the small lad's feet stuck straight out in front of him. Smarty did not notice any lack of dignity about his position, however, and replied cordially: "Because we think you can help us the most of anybody in town. We're going to give a pageant to celebrate the two-hundredth anniversary of Carleton, and this is the com-

mittee on scenes, and you could help us choose good historical occurrences to act, because of your library. It would be kind of you," added Smarty, remembering his manners, " to do so, and we should be much obliged."

" A pageant, eh? " The judge looked chilly. Alison registered disapproval, too, but the judge might not have noticed it, for he was apparently gazing at Camilla's hat, a pretty one, black with a single big red rose. " A pageant! Girls all want to get dressed up and show off, I suppose? "

Camilla, evidently thinking the remark was addressed to her, laughed outright gayly.

" Well, I do love to get dressed up," she admitted; " but I don't want to do what you call ' show off.' No, if I should represent some one historic, Judge Trenholm, I'd want to be just as good and fine and splendid as that person was, so every one could see the real character. Do you see what I mean? "

The judge looked surprised, but not dis-

pleased. Camilla's sweet, gracious spontaneity, her artistic instinct, were natural and disarming.

"You ought to have a good part," he observed, almost as if in spite of himself.

"Oh, anything will do for me," demurred Camilla, modestly, "so long as I can take part at all, as Miss Page has arranged."

"What has she done?" asked the judge, waving aside politely Miss Page's whispered, "Camilla, dear!"

"She's got my father to let me stay in school until the end of the year!"

The judge put on his glasses, and looked at Camilla's beaming face. "You're Mr. Caro's daughter, aren't you?" She nodded proudly. "Were you going to leave school? Why?"

"To work in the store." Her face fell slightly.

"To work in the store!" repeated the judge. "How old are you?"

"Fourteen next week!"

Camilla beamed again. The judge pon-

dered. Was there a single flash from those sharp eyes toward the picture of the merry baseball player over the fireplace? Lucille thought so, but could not be sure, so quickly had the judge snapped at Dick, "What do you want to have this celebration for?"

It was quite apparent that the judge's curiosity was based on Dick's reputation as a disturber of celebrations. Alison offered the judge a sympathetic glance. Dick turned bright red, but commanded himself, and answered respectfully: "I think we ought to pay a tribute to our town history, sir; and a celebration would give us young people something interesting to do."

"You think it's dull here, do you?" asked the judge, pouncing on the word "interesting."

Dick stood his ground. "Sometimes. Not that I think it should be. We just don't get much chance to show what we can do, somehow."

The judge grunted, and, without further comment, whirled on Will.

"What's your idea about this pageant—er—boy?"

That the question was vague, sudden, rather unfriendly, and that the judge evidently had no idea who Will was, did not disconcert that resolute lad, who was used to snubs and emergencies.

"I like pageants," he answered, in a perfectly self-possessed way.

Most of his hearers thought that as good an answer as any, and felt quite proud of Will.

"How do you know anything about them?" asked the judge, skeptically.

"I have read about them in the public library. Yes, sir, I mean the one in Hallett."

"That's twenty miles away. It costs money to get there."

"It does," admitted Will; "I can take care of that."

"Indeed!" The judge looked interested. "How?"

"I clean codfish for the fishermen at the

docks. They pay me ten cents an hour, and all the sounds I want."

"Sounds? You mean the air-sacs the fish swim with?" Will nodded. "What in the name of sense do you want with them?"

"My mother fries them for supper. Then she can give me money for lunch in Hallett. I go there every other Saturday, to the library. Fried sounds are very good," explained Will, politely, seeing the judge's stupefaction; "I should not eat them if they were not."

"That," observed the judge after a short pause, "I am inclined to believe. But do you like to clean codfish?"

"It's work," explained Will philosophically; "and I work to go to the library. All codfish are the same inside."

The walls of the stately old room rang with the first laughter, probably, heard there in years. Alison alone preserved her dignity in the face of this unrefined conversation, until she saw that Judge Trenholm was convulsed; this took her aback, but she hastened

to look slightly more tolerant, as he finally ejaculated: "Well, I guess you're on your way somewhere—er—boy! What's your name, anyhow?"

"William Stanwood Blair," replied Will, with dignity.

Was there, again, a lightning flash of those sharp old eyes toward the fireplace, over which hung that picture of a boy in uniform? Again, Lucille could not be sure; she herself was already under cross-examination.

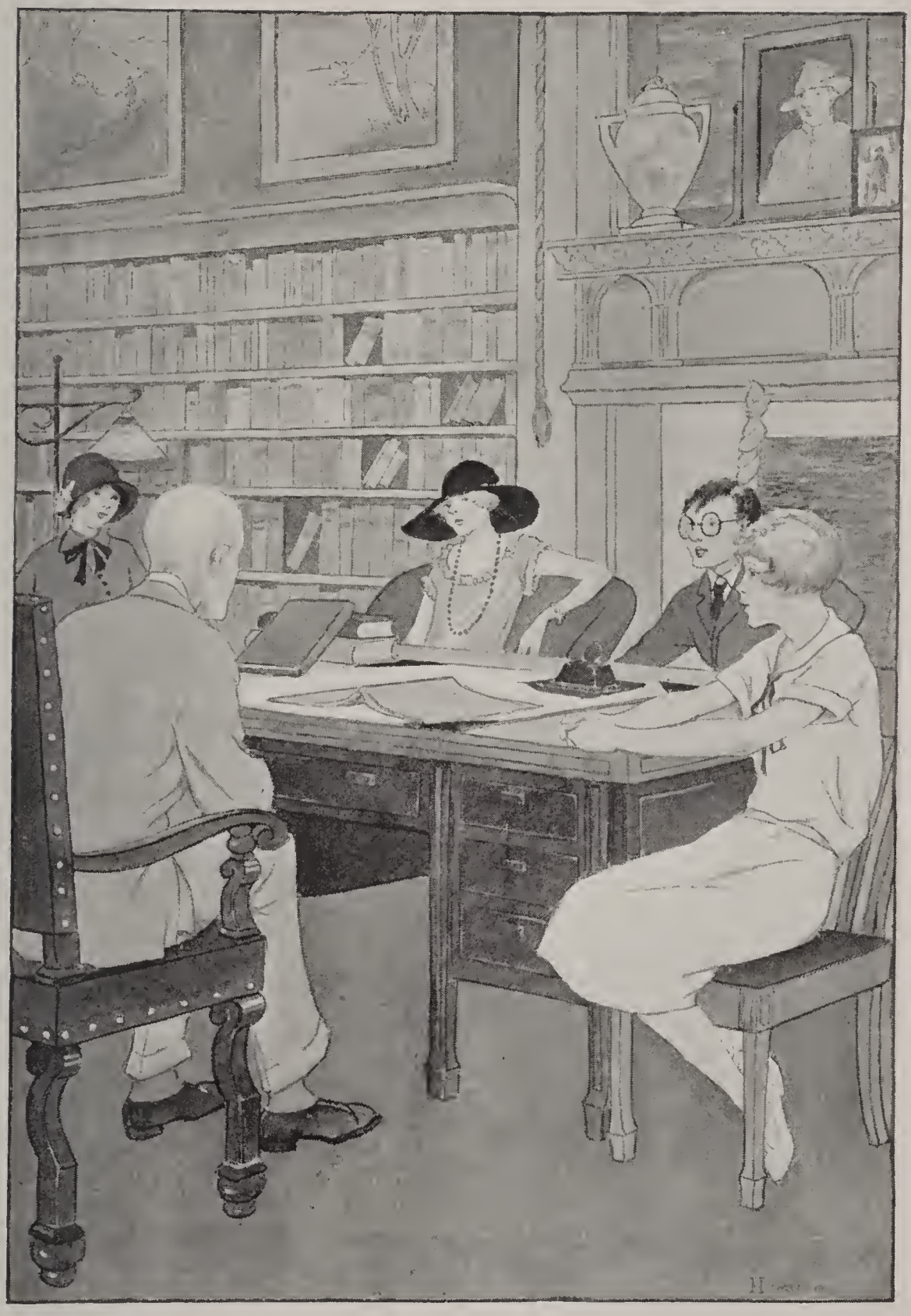
"Well, Lucille," observed the judge, leaning back as if expecting a fine long answer to whatever he was going to ask, "since your father edits the *News,* you must know a great deal about the town. I suppose you've already many fine ideas for scenes for this—this proposed pageant. Let's hear a few!"

Lucille knew much depended on her answer. If she could only clinch the interest of the judge, which the others must have aroused ——!

"I thought," she began carefully, "that we might represent the Vikings who touched here during their voyage of discovery in 1000 A. D. And then I thought of the Indians who were friendly to some of our first settlers, and asked for a teacher. And General Lafayette visited Carleton on his farewell tour,—why couldn't we have a scene with him? And of course we had famous women, too, especially Pamela Harrold, our wonderful artist who invented the Carleton homespun weaves. I thought surely we should have something about her in the show. Those are a few of my ideas."

"You've left out," commented the judge rather brusquely, giving no indication as to whether he was or was not impressed with this creditable list, "the most important of all the events in Carleton history. Who knows to what I allude?"

Out of a clear sky panic fell upon the company. Lucille, Dick, Will, and Smarty knew well about the judge's rumored prejudice; so, doubtless, did Alison, his old family



"YOU'VE LEFT OUT THE MOST IMPORTANT OF ALL THE EVENTS IN CARLETON HISTORY"—*Page 176.*

friend. Camilla's big frightened eyes hinted that she had certainly heard reports of some unpleasant topic that might "start arguments," with sad results. Even Miss Page turned pale. Was it for this that the members of the committee had passed through such an ordeal, and answered so many curious questions endlessly put to them by the judge? For if he should now want to talk about the silver-plaque story; if he really did believe the town had lost its talisman, and no effort was much use until that returned, what on earth might happen to the pageant ——?

"I know to what you allude!" cried Smarty, flinging himself instantly into the breach. "You allude to the Barbary pirates!"

"Eh-h-h?" rasped the astounded judge. "Are you trying to be funny, young man?"

"No, sir," denied Smarty, soberly; "I'm *not* funny."

A faint smile appeared even on Miss Page's face; and Alison began to laugh.

Commencing as her taunting, superior little giggle, that laugh unexpectedly broke bounds. Alison, horrified, found a handkerchief, gagged herself, and kept straight on laughing. She laughed and laughed, she gasped for breath, tears rained down her cheeks, Miss Page spoke to her, the judge glared at her,—she laughed. Then suddenly, with a frightful hiccough, she came to a full stop.

There was a scandalized, appalling silence. It was broken by Alison herself. To show her self-possession, she started to put away her handkerchief; but the pocket in the rustling taffeta skirt of the elegant frock was very elusive, and her efforts to locate it were punctuated by a loudly-tinkling chain bracelet. The judge could stand no more, and it was Alison's turn for an examination, too. He pounced on her.

"Why don't you like this pageant idea? Hey?" he demanded. "I noticed you didn't right from the start. Why not?"

"Oh—I don't know——" Alison, sur-

prised that her thoughts should have been read, choked and stammered.

"What are your objections?" insisted the judge.

"I—I don't know if there are enough—er—good people at school to do it well," faltered Alison, in her agitation speaking her thoughts much too clearly for the taste of her companions.

"How many of you are there?"

"I don't know ——"

"One hundred and one," murmured Dick.

The judge pushed his glasses up on his forehead, and viewed Alison without any special manifestation of pleasure.

"If I thought there were a hundred more like you," he remarked frankly, "I'd send the whole lot packing. I suppose you call yourself the best there is in Carleton?"

Even though she had brought her troubles on herself, Alison was in a hard position. She sniffed woefully, and by silence assented to the judge's question, for she had no idea what to say.

"I've had some surprises this afternoon," said the judge; "not disagreeable ones, either. But if the best of you—and there must be many more best ones, so called—can do nothing but find fault and say they don't know anything, I guess there's no use going on."

Indignant glances assailed Alison. Had she spoiled the whole project? The public wrath she sensed was so strong that she forgot her object had been to make the judge withhold his help. All she saw was that he was disaffected because he didn't like her, and he did like the others! Why, oh, why? But suddenly she heard Smarty's voice: "Excuse me, Judge; Alison can write some of the nicest poetry you ever heard. She could write some for the pageant; I know she could."

"Hey?"

"You thought Alison couldn't do anything. Well, last week she gave a treasure-hunt, and the clues were all beautiful poems ——"

"Indeed! Did you go, and find the treasure, detective style?"

"No," denied Smarty, so much in earnest that he was quite impervious to this rather unkind satire; "Alison invited only prominent people. But Lucille"—with a firm, stubby finger he indicated that agitated damsel—"went, and found the key to the treasure-chest, and so she told us all the poems that were the clues, and they were awful nice, and Alison *could* write some of them for the pageant."

"She could, eh?" echoed the judge, beginning to look a little worn-out. His guests, even Alison, were beginning to look cheered.

"Yes, sir; everybody can do something."

"What can you do, for instance?"

Smarty calmly considered his talents, apparently realizing that his bodily presence did not promise much dramatic gift, while his social qualities had certain limitations.

"Well, I can look things up in books awful well," he finally announced.

"Indeed?" remarked the judge. "By the way, that reminds me: I think you must have acquired some information by that means, which, I must say, escapes me for the moment. What did you mean a few minutes ago by saying I had made an allusion to the Barbary pirates?"

Was that awful silver plaque coming up again? Smarty again met the crisis.

"Why," he inquired in a tone of surprise, "don't you know about the Carleton shipwrights that went down to Georgia to supply labor to cut the live-oak timber to build the six great frigates for our first navy? They were the ships"—Smarty's eyes glittered—"that swept the pirates of Tripoli and Algiers from the seas! They won the freedom of the seas for American seamen! I got that all out of a book that came from the Hallett library, and I think it should be the most important scene in the pageant!"

This time the judge seemed quite overwhelmed; in fact, he said nothing for so long, being apparently wrapped in deep re-

flection, that his visitors began to fidget with apprehension. Then he spoke; and again they got a shock.

"I do not know," he said, "that I am wholly disinclined to help your project. I was, at one time, but since most of you do seem to be sincere and unselfish, and to wish to do your best for your home, as I once saw another ——" He broke off abruptly. "Suppose we see what can be done in the way of scenes."

Jerking his head at Dick, he indicated, with a thin white hand, a line of red-leather-bound volumes on a top shelf.

"Step up on that ladder and hand those down, will you, young man? They're copies of town records, probably useful for your purpose," he explained to the committee. "You can go through them and make notes as you like. But mind: no finger-prints, and don't turn up pages from the bottom!"

And now the stately library was filled with the noise of scratching pencils, and eager discussions as to the dramatic possi-

bilities of historic Carleton events. Everybody worked with might and main, including Alison, who seemed to have quite changed her mind about the desirability of the celebration, though she said not one single word more the whole afternoon. The bugbear that had twice threatened the occasion seemed to have disappeared; there was no allusion to it in the red-bound books. There proved to be an amazing list of good events from which the school could choose striking scenes for the pageant; even in modern times, with its fisheries and prosperous farming, statistics showed Carleton to be not quite so "dead" as had been thought. Finally, as the late afternoon shadows began to cover the green lawn outside the windows, Miss Page insisted that too much of the judge's time had already been taken up, and made the move for the well-satisfied committee to leave.

"Just read over the list once," requested the judge.

Dick complied; it sounded splendid.

"And yet," commented the judge with sudden faint testiness, "you've left out still the most important thing that ever happened here! Don't any of you know about the fishing fleet that took down the codfish to the West Indies to stop a famine, and won the town a silver plaque?"

This time the lightning had struck!

It was at Lucille, opposite him, that he shot the question. Only a direct answer was in order. She knew all her companions were holding strangled breaths; she herself just managed her own.

"Yes," she answered; "I have heard about that."

"And you know the plaque was lost forty years ago?"

"Yes, Judge Trenholm. Perhaps that was why we didn't think of including the fishermen's exploit as a scene. You see, we want the pageant to be—well—cheerful and inspiring."

"I see," said the judge. "Then you must know, too, that many believe that the plaque

must return before the town can prosper as in old days?"

"I have heard that story," assented Lucille, gently.

"Story! Don't you believe it?"

What a question! For the truth was, Lucille had never been able to decide just what she did think of that tradition. Yet now, strangely, in that awful minute when she must speak truthfully, yet say nothing to wound that sad, cantankerous old man who, after all, had shown himself not so very unfriendly, and whose loneliness must touch any heart, the right answer sprang to her mind crystal-clear.

"I don't think it was the plaque that made us prosper," said Lucille, boldly.

"What do you think it was?"

"I think it was that spirit which those fishermen showed, when they heroically did an unselfish service. That won the plaque, it is true; but," cried Lucille, in happy surprise as the whole truth burst upon her, "whoever has such a spirit must prosper!

So, if we have it, we shall prosper, plaque or no plaque! At least, that's the way it seems to me, Judge Trenholm."

"Well! All right. Good-afternoon to you all," said the judge, abruptly.

But as the visitors filed out, he added: "If you need more help, you can say so!"

CHAPTER XI

GINGER'S SCHEME

"I WILL not go and sew!" cried Alison, peevishly.

"You'd better," suggested Mary, gently.

"You'd just better!" qualified Ginger, wrathfully.

The three were standing before the closed door of Miss Page's classroom. It was the middle of an afternoon a week following the visit to Judge Trenholm, and Alison had just made an unsuccessful attempt to slip past the door and up-stairs. But Mary had at that moment come along the hall, and Ginger had stepped off the first-floor landing, and both had hurried to detain her. Their attitude was severe.

"It seems to me," suggested Mary, "that the least you can do now is to help people who have good ideas to carry them out."

"I don't want to help Ethel Merriam!"

"Have some public spirit, can't you?" scolded Ginger. "You and your plan to stop things! Why, you started them all going! All the eight scenes are settled, and everybody has a part, and all the committees are appointed, and working ——"

"And some people that said they backed me don't seem to be overcome with grief!" snapped back Alison, not so cordial an ally of Ginger's, it would appear, as formerly. "You haven't such a poor part yourself, have you, now? Young Indian braves wear wonderful costumes, though perhaps they don't talk quite so much as pirate chiefs!"

"Watch your step!" scowled Ginger, somehow touched on a nerve.

"And you, Mary," continued Alison, unheeding; "you decided you could stand being a girl who danced with Lafayette on his visit here, didn't you? And Tom is so tickled with the cute way he runs meetings, that he has to be chairman of the finance committee, and pester everybody to death selling twenty-five-cent tickets ——"

"What about yourself?" interrupted Ginger.

"I'm writing those connecting verses for the scenes *only* because I get credit for them in English!"

"*I* see. Well, the fact is now, that since there's going to be a pageant, our crowd ought to run it."

"Of course," said Mary. "Where are you going, Ginger?"

"To the assembly-room, to see what Will Blair and those other fellows on the staging committee are doing."

"What are they supposed to be doing?"

"Helping the carpenter widen the platform."

"It'll be a big change for you to drive a few nails!" called Alison, acrimoniously, as Ginger started down-stairs.

Mary seized her firmly. Mary had been remarkably firm this last week.

"Alison, behave! The crowd is awfully mad at you."

"Mean things!"

"Not at all. You acted like a perfect goose at Judge Trenholm's, and got us all laughed at."

"Well, I have told you about a hundred times that I *could not* stop laughing. I was nervous; I was trying to help you all. And do I get gratitude or sympathy?"

"Well, it's up to you to work and behave if you want people to like you again. Now, don't pout; just get busy."

Mary flung the door open, and there was no escape.

Yet even Alison was unwillingly impressed with the charm of the scene before her. Every desk in the room was covered with a pile of bright-colored cheesecloth, muslin, or Canton flannel; in front of each desk sat an industrious girl, sewing, cutting, basting. Tables were covered with sheets of rainbow-colored tissue-paper, layers of silver and gold, paste-pots and brushes. And everywhere, it seemed, was the lively, energetic figure of Ethel, working harder than any one else, if that were possible.

For, in the appointment of the committees, Ethel had been given a place of honor well suited to her. To the general satisfaction of every one, she was chairman of the costume committee, and the dazzling, well-organized industry surrounding her was the creation of her busy brain and hand. She greeted the newcomers heartily.

"Hurrah! More people coming to work! Well, not to waste any time, will you please get a needle and sew this fringe right on this Indian costume, Mary? Thanks so much! Alison, do go and help Mildred Wrenn fix General Lafayette's wig,—it's hard work for one person."

A glance from Mary, whose needle was already flashing in and out of the brown fringe on her lap, urged Alison on to a sticky job of cotton and mucilage. Mildred lifted a flushed face, and rested some tired fingers a moment.

"With all this work, I hope we'll make some money," she remarked.

"Don't expect that," warned Ethel.

"But Tom says that if we sell all the tickets, we ought to cover expenses,—these materials, you know, and the boards for the platform extension. I think that would be good, for our first big celebration. Don't you think so?"

"Fine!" agreed Mary. "It would hardly do to come out of it in debt, would it? How much has been spent, Ethel?"

"The materials are worth about thirty dollars; but though we offered to find cash for them, of course, the storekeeper and carpenter let us take them on credit, because they wanted to help the pageant. Wasn't that kind? They said to pay for them after we had taken in the money."

"Doesn't that show a lot of interest?" cried Mildred, resuming her work on the wig with enthusiasm. "And it shows confidence in us, too, I think."

"It's wonderful!" agreed Mary. "And, of course, it puts special responsibility on us, to reward the confidence, doesn't it?"

"Why, naturally," said Mildred, who

was not fond of flat commonplaces, and didn't mind letting people know how she felt about it.

Alison giggled so Mary heard her, and began to help Mildred with much more spirit. But spirited work was the rule and not the exception, under Ethel's supervision, and in an hour costumes and properties had progressed so far that an exhibition was felt to be in order.

"Where's Miss Page?" asked Lucille, who had been listening, not talking, while she worked on a glittering cardboard-and-silver-paper shield that some bold Viking was to carry. "She said she was coming in this afternoon to help us sew."

"She must have been badly delayed, somehow," said Ethel.

The girls glanced at one another with a touch of uneasiness; Miss Page would never have forgotten her promise. Had anything happened? As if to confirm premonitions, at that very instant Ginger Burnham shot in at the door, wildly excited, and followed by

Will Blair and all the boys on the carpentry committee.

"Say, listen!" cried Ginger, forgetting that one should break bad news gently, particularly to ladies. "The carpenter says the platform down-stairs won't hold an extension strong enough for the big scenes! There might be a terrible accident."

Consternation reigned. Ethel spoke first: "Can't we use the assembly-room at all?"

"Oh, yes, for all the smaller scenes ——"

"That the upper classes are giving?" shot in Mildred, transferring a sharp glance from Ginger to Mary and her satellites.

"Why, we can't sacrifice everything, just because some changes have to be made ——"

"Why can't we hold the whole pageant somewhere else?" asked Lucille.

Ginger shook his head, and the other boys looked equally dubious.

"We must hold it where we can get an audience large enough to pay expenses. There's no other hall in town larger than ours, or as large."

These statements were quite true. The bitterness of the disappointment that appeared on the faces of the younger students, whose large classes were planning the larger scenes, was pathetic. Camilla left the table where she had been helping Lucille, and tried to comfort them. Despairing silence had given way to a buzz of exasperation and rage, when Miss Page came hastily in, looking quite worried.

For not only was the news true, but the suggestion to shorten the pageant—Ginger's originally, it appeared—would really have to be considered, to save the situation at all. In the midst of an animated discussion as to what could best be omitted from the program, Lucille whispered to Ethel: "Those poor children! Can't anything be done for them?"

"Something must be—I'm sure I don't know what," muttered Ethel. "Mildred's quite right; Ginger and his crowd want to grab this show and run it."

"Alison doesn't. She's paying no atten-

tion to them,—or," frowned Lucille, puzzled, "or they to her ——"

"Never mind that now," said Ethel; "listen!"

Ginger had the floor.

"So we could leave out the pirates and the Vikings and one of those modern scenes without absolutely ruining the show."

"It would be very regrettable," came from Miss Page, reluctantly.

Ethel suddenly sprang up on a chair, and clapped her hands violently. That word "pirates"! Had Ginger only known how it helped her!

"I've just had an inspiration!" she cried. "Let's give the performance on Battery Cape!"

Gasps greeted this original suggestion.

"The idea just came to me!" rushed on Ethel; "we simply must not leave out one single person from the pageant! I think Battery Cape's just made for our show! You know, right below the gun battery, there's a wide, flat, semicircular space?

That could be the stage; it's plenty big enough. The audience can sit on the hill; that's plenty big enough! And you know lots of pageants are given outdoors."

"It's a *grand* idea!" cried Mildred, in wild enthusiasm. "The background of the bay will be perfectly beautiful, and the weather's sure to be fine by the date of the performance, and everybody can come! We have special responsibility," she twittered gayly. "It is our duty to reward the confidence of all the public that's taking an interest in us!"

A chorus of giggles, in which Camilla's musical laughter could be distinguished, did not particularly please the proponents of a curtailed celebration. They rallied, in fact, and stood together quite firmly.

"What about those five guns? They'll be right in the way of the audience," pointed out Ginger, practically.

"And there are no curtains or wings. How can you produce the show right out in the open?" asked Mary. "And the

"Let's give the performance on Battery Cape!"
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cape's public property. How can we use it? It's in a terrible mess, anyhow."

There were, indeed, practical difficulties in the way of the new plan. But as even Miss Page began to look dubious, help arrived from an unexpected quarter. Little Mildred Wrenn, penetrating and sharp-witted, for once lent her ready tongue to support a real ideal of which she was firmly convinced.

"Listen!" she commanded; and her good presence and speech drew instant attention. "It would be horrible to change the whole spirit of this celebration, as we'd have to, if we left any one out of it. We're all working for the show, and for the town, aren't we? Then let's keep right on ahead, together! If Battery Cape's our one hope, let's make it a certainty! If it means extra work, let's do extra work. But don't let's give up our big chance to go ahead together and show what we are—not for anything on earth!"

"Hurray-ray-ray!" cried voices all over

the room. "Three cheers! No, we won't change the show—we'll all be in it! What's the first thing to do?"

Miss Page laughed heartily at an uproar she seemed for once ready to tolerate, as she answered: "You'll have to get permission from the town council to use the property."

"Judge Trenholm will help us!" piped up Camilla. "Why, he asked us to come to him if we needed more help!"

"Good! And then you'll have to move those cannon ——"

"We boys can drag them over temporarily to one side of the field," suggested Will.

"As for the staging—perhaps I can think of some way that difficulties can be adjusted, if you will help me."

"We will!" came cries from all over the room. "And why can't we go down before the performance, and pick up all those papers and things, and make the whole cape look nice?"

A good deal of enthusiasm had sprung up; but Ginger made a last stand.

"Look here," he exclaimed, "what about the money? We have to raise thirty dollars. We've sold lots of tickets for a quarter. Are people going to pay a quarter to sit on the ground? They'll say we sold the tickets under false pretenses, and they'll ask for their money back, and maybe not come. Do we want to get in wrong with everybody, and into debt, too, while we're showing how patriotic we are?"

This issue was undoubtedly important. Enthusiasm was checked rather sharply. Ginger looked triumphant, and his friends, waiting questioningly, suggested no solution. If the management of the show was, after all, coming their way, they didn't mind it in the least.

"I know what we could do," said Lucille.

For the need of the moment had roused something new in her, as it had in Mildred, a moment before; she realized that no one in the room but herself could have thought of

just the practical solution for that special difficulty.

"That is," she continued, "we could do it if all of you approve. The *News* goes to press to-morrow, to come out Friday. By Friday we'll know if we can use the cape. I know my father would be glad to save space for an article to be put in at the last moment, which will tell people about our new plans. We can also decide what would be fair to do about the tickets we've sold, and announce that. Ever so many people are interested in the pageant; they'll help us, I think, if we asked their help the right way. What do you think?"

"Fine!" cried many voices.

Hope, indeed, revived again; and it was rather encouraging to see that the ranks of the opposition became quieter. Ginger did not look exactly delighted, it was true; but a good many of his cronies, who could not have said so if their lives had depended on it, gave evidence by their expressions that perhaps, after all, it was no harm if every-

body that had started in the show could finish with it. So far had a better public opinion advanced, at any rate.

"Then," said Lucille, "if one of the boys would run down to the newspaper office ——"

"I'll run!" piped up a voice not heard during the councils.

"That Smarty!" cried Ginger. "Where's he been hiding?"

"I was not hiding!" cried Smarty indignantly. "Some folks have been so busy saying what's the matter with everything they can't run themselves, that they didn't know anybody was here but themselves! *I* don't talk unless I've something to say, but I'll run to your father's office, Lucille!"

Amid waves of giggles from the pro-cape party, and perhaps a few even from the corner where Ginger was standing, Lucille hustled the protesting but eager messenger out of the door. He halted a second in the hall, and whispered excitedly: "The show's going through, sure!"

"I hope so!" breathed Lucille.

"When we all put that show across," declared Smarty, solemnly, "there's no telling what'll happen. I know it!"

"All right, Robert. Run along!" urged Lucille, not paying much attention, so weary was she after the afternoon's ups and downs.

But still the messenger lingered.

"Lucille, your father has a telegraph in his office, hasn't he?"

"Yes, but ——"

"Well, couldn't he telegraph the news —"

"Listen, Robert: there isn't any news yet," warned Lucille; "we've only made a plan. You leave any telegraphing and announcements to my father. But if you want to make some news, you'd better run along!"

"I will!"

Off sped Smarty finally on that important errand; and Lucille returned to the classroom to find the combination thimble-party and mass-meeting adjourning at last.

CHAPTER XII

A FISH STORY

WITH work put away and workers scattered, and still the end of a bright sunny afternoon left, Lucille assented readily to Ethel's proposal that they should stroll down their favorite road to Battery Cape, and see if it would come up to expectations as a location for the pageant.

Neglected as it was, any one could see that in itself it would make a practical and charming setting, especially if put in order.

"O dear me!" sighed Lucille, who felt very tired after the shocks of the afternoon, "what a lot of work there is to do here! Do you suppose this pageant will ever really *happen,* Ethel? I am so tired of fussing and fighting about it!"

"Cheer up!" urged Ethel, though she looked tired herself. "Pageants are always a lot of trouble, I guess. And if you look

back over what we've come through, Lucille, you'll see that lots of things have gone very well. Why, ever since we got Judge Trenholm's help, everything has just sailed right along, until this afternoon; and even then, you could see how many people have been won over to work for the great cause. Of course, we need everybody. But if Ginger, and all that crowd, see things are going to succeed, I believe they'll calm down yet, and be a help, too, instead of just a hindrance."

"Do you think so? Ginger was certainly specially bent on running things to-day."

"Oh, there was something special the matter with him; Dick told me."

"What was it?"

"He wanted to be pirate chief in the scene Smarty Mason's class is getting up; they're all little boys, you know, and they put Ginger out, and wouldn't have him! They're going to have George Anderson for chief, because he can talk louder than anybody else!"

Lucille giggled. "There's a place for every talent in this show, isn't there? Oh, what's that? Oo-oo-hoo! Hallo!"

Her hail had answered one from Captain Jim; there, at the bottom of the hill, was his fishing-boat. Dick was on board, buckling his long boots, and beside him was Will, preparing to cast off.

"Want to come along fishing, girls?" called the captain. "We're going to the Point for a short spell."

With shrieks of delight, the two girls dashed down the hill and leaped into the tossing boat. Captain Jim did not invite everybody to accompany him on fishing-trips.

"Thought I'd take out two of my best pupils, seeing specially they must be kind of tired after such a hard afternoon's work," explained the captain, who had evidently heard some details from Will.

"How lovely of you, Captain Jim! We're not tired any longer, and we'll take a big catch for you," promised Ethel.

"Then if we do, you must spin us a yarn," declared Lucille.

"Sure!" promised the captain. "Turn about's fair play."

He set the boat toward the Point, that long cape on the opposite side of Hallett Bay. It was a stretch of pine-covered ledges, and fishing was always good there. The spray dashed over the boat, the sunlight danced on the waves, there was just enough wind to be bracing. Soon the boat swung into a little cove, and the boys arranged long lines, which they had baited with herring, along the sides.

Then the fishing party took up a watch; but they had not long to wait. One of Lucille's lines jerked almost immediately; she hauled it in, and, with Captain Jim's assistance, brought aboard a fourteen-pound codfish. Though it was not of unusual size, the captain read in the promptitude of the bite sure prophecy of a profitable afternoon, and was delighted with the prospects. Nor was he disappointed, for shortly two simul-

taneous bites for Dick and Will started great activity. All five fishers were breathlessly busy for a long time, landing their fish, renewing bait, and piling the catch up in the deep bottom of the motor-boat. Finally the excitement became so great that, to quote the captain, "the fish got wise," for they refused to be caught any more for a while.

"Better wait a bit," said Captain Jim, settling himself comfortably in the bow. "They'll come back if you'll leave the lines there, and don't make a racket. That's the way with fish, and folks, too, for that matter."

"Then we'll all keep quiet, and you can tell us that story you promised us," suggested Lucille; "you can speak low, Captain Jim, and we can all hear you perfectly well here on the water. Look!" She pointed to the bottom of the boat. "Isn't that a big catch, already?"

"Oh, I pay my debts!" declared the captain; "and I'll never break a promise while

the head, hand, and heart rule together! Let's see: what'll the story be about to-day?"

"Before you start, do tell us why you always say that about the head, hand, and heart," begged Dick. "I've never heard another person say it. What does it mean? Did you make it up?"

"Not me!" denied the captain. "But that pledge of mine will do for the story itself, folks, as Dick has reminded me. Those words were said to me nigh on to forty years ago, I guess, by the queerest fellow I ever saw, and I've seen a few. He was a prince."

"A prince!" cried Ethel and Lucille together, rapturously.

"He didn't wear no crown, girls, nor any ermine robe, neither," warned the captain, "but he was the son of a Gypsy king, so I reckon that, according to his own calculations, anyway, he was a prince. But you'd never guess where he said it to me."

"Where?" demanded four excited voices.

"Now, don't scare them fish away! He said it to me on Battery Cape!"

"Go on, go on!" hoarsely urged four loud whispers.

"Well," proceeded the captain, "one afternoon when I was a lively young rascal not so much older than you, I took my little sailing-boat down the bay yonder for some fish. At first the fish didn't bite so well, and I stayed later than I meant to; and then, just as I started home, one of our famous big blows came suddenly on, and I saw I'd never get back until well after dark.

"I did my best, feeling my folks would be worried, but it wasn't until after ten o'clock that I managed to get past the Point here. Even inside the bay, I found it blowing enough to make me keep near shore. I'd just reached Battery Cape, at last, and was about to make for the pier, when all of a sudden I heard a yell close by—then a splash—then—silence.

"I headed in the direction of the yell," continued the old sailor, to an intent audi-

ence. "I called out, and held up my lantern so as to see across the water. Next second I heard the most awful screechings that ever struck my ears before or since. They kept up, so I judged that whoever had fallen overboard hadn't been drowned, anyhow!

"At last I saw something in the water not far away. It was getting very shallow. I hove an anchor overboard, and jumped in, holding the lantern over my head. I waded straight up the beach, and there, over by the cliff side of the cape, I picked up the young one that was making all the noise. He was about six years old, standing in a couple of feet of water, the scaredest youngster I ever laid eyes on, and no Carleton boy whatever! Dark-complected and untidy and wild-looking and soaking wet, he was some sight; and when he saw me, he yelled louder than ever.

"Not much flattered, I grabbed him. 'Here, hush, bub,' says I; 'this situation inconveniences me, too. Where'd you come from?'

"He pointed up the cape. He must have wandered down to the cliff in the dark, and fallen off, I thought. Then, next minute, I saw some lights flashing up beside the gun battery, and I saw the whole thing: there was a Gypsy encampment there for the night, and he was one of the Gypsy children!"

"Oh, Captain Jim!" gasped Lucille, all a-thrill. "And you had to go up and give him back ——?"

"That's right! And fond of adventures as I was, I didn't crave that one," declared the captain, frankly. "I never took no stock in people that go trapesing all over creation in wagons, and it was the middle of the night, and I was alone, and Gypsies ain't just known for their hospitality. Still, I had to look out for the child. So I stepped ashore, with him in my arms, and next minute I'd climbed the cape, and was at the encampment. It was as still as the tomb. Evidently the child hadn't been missed, or his cries heard. I called out;

and the next minute I got the jolt I was looking for.

"The most ferocious-looking feller you ever saw bounded out of a tent straight at me! I sha'n't tell no lies; it's the truth I was frightened stiff ——"

"I believe you!" declared Dick, with conviction.

"But the child wasn't frightened at all, and struggled down out of my arms, and ran toward the man, crying out something I didn't understand. I thought I'd best explain my informal evening call pretty quick.

"'Your little boy must have walked in his sleep, or run off, maybe,' I says. 'I picked him out of the water right down below the cliff.'

"'How'd you happen to be there?' asks the man, suspicious.

"He was over six feet high, about thirty years old, I judged, and was very dark and savage-looking. He'd a fine black-velvet coat, and a right handsome red-silk handker-

chief tied around his throat. Even by lantern-light he looked impressive; to tell you the truth, after a second chance to look at him, I sort of took to him, somehow.

"'I was fishing down the bay, and got caught out late in the big windstorm that's just passed. I live here, and I'm just coming in now,' I explained.

" He looked me over mighty careful, and, not seeing anything but an innocent-looking kid in a sou'wester and slicker and boots, appeared to be more satisfied.

"'I thank you for what you did,' he finally said, wonderfully majestic. 'It is my son you rescued. I am in your debt.'

"'That's all right,' says I, and started to slide off as tactful as possible. For, folks, just at that second I heard footsteps behind me, from the direction of the road, and I'd noticed that the Gypsy had heard them, too, and didn't look too pleased, either.

" If you'd asked me, in fact, I'd have said he looked kind of scared. But I couldn't get away quick enough; up behind me

stepped another man, and I saw then why the first Gypsy had been uneasy. This second fellow was much older, and even more decorated, and a lot fiercer. Under his arm I could see he was holding some sort of square, flat package. Right away, the younger man spoke to him, though I couldn't understand what they said. The old fellow kept looking at me as if he'd eat me up in two bites, for half a cent; but finally he went away, without saying anything to me, to the encampment behind the cannon. The little boy scrambled down from his father's arms, and ran off, too. But when I tried to leave again, the father stopped me.

" ' To-morrow I shall be gone,' he said, so low I could hardly hear him; ' but I would have you know that I shall forever remember your deed to-night. Know that you have not only saved my son; you doubtless saved a future king for our tribe, also. For as I expect to succeed my father, so I expect my boy to succeed me. It is our custom.'

"'That's all right,' says I; 'anybody, king or no king, that needs my help, gets it; that's how we do things in this town.'

"'Every soil,' says the Gypsy, 'has its own secret; and so you have told me yours: brotherhood. It is well! It must remain the secret of your soil, guarded by those guns'—and he pointed, the strangest way, to those five old cannon of the battery—'so long as the head, the hand, and the heart rule together.'"

"Oh-h-h!" gasped four delighted voices, as the captain reached this most satisfactory climax. "So that's where your famous pledge comes from, Captain Jim!"

"And then what did the Gypsy do?" demanded Will.

"He disappeared into the darkness as quick as he had appeared. No, I never saw him again. What did I do? Waded out into the water again, and brought my boat to the pier, and went home to bed at last. Believe me, folks, I slept!"

"And what did people say when you told them all your adventures?" cried Ethel.

"Well, now," confided the captain with a hesitating grin, "you folks are the first I ever told!"

"No! Why? Because you were out so late?" demanded Dick, plainly showing his great astonishment.

"Oh, no, I couldn't help that, and it made no trouble. Well, you see, for one thing, Gypsies were much disliked here, and some folks treated them awful unkind. When I went down early next morning to clean my boat, the whole lot of them had gone, so I just judged I would keep quiet and not say I'd seen them, especially because they hadn't been there when I went down in the afternoon to get my boat. They'd stayed only for the night. I felt if I'd saved their kid and then went and told on them, they'd think badly of me, with some reason. And it was the next day or so that my father got me my first job on board a big ship, and I was that excited about going off to see the

world that I never thought about them Gypsies for years, I'm sure. I just remembered that man's pledge, because it was kind of mouth-filling, I guess."

"Well, that was a wonderful story!" declared Lucille.

The captain looked much gratified.

"Some would call it a fish story," he suggested. "There's nothing to prove it!"

"Never mind, we all believe it, and think it's splendid!" declared Ethel. "As for fish,—they ought to bite the whole rest of the afternoon so we can catch enough to repay you for it! Oh, good, they're starting! No, Lucille, he's on my line; go away! Oh, there's one on Dick's! Oh, what big ones! Was there ever such an exciting afternoon?"

CHAPTER XIII

UNTANGLED

At last, indeed, the whole undertaking of the pageant seemed to be going along smoothly and with a rush as well. Judge Trenholm used his good offices with the town council, and the use of Battery Cape for the performance was willingly granted. Rehearsals proceeded, costumes progressed. Lucille's father inserted a very pleasant article in the *News* regarding the highly original enterprise, the promoters of which were to give a local entertainment in the best possible setting. The Saturday afternoon before the performance was set as the day when the cape should be cleared and put in order. And then ——

Proceedings suddenly struck a most mysterious snag!

Only a handful of the older and stronger students, on whose work the house-cleaning

of the cape mainly depended, would promise to come and work on Saturday afternoon.

It was a serious matter. The large majority of the boys and girls were still enthusiastic, and would certainly be on hand to work. But, as Will pointed out to an informal indignation meeting proceeding homeward up the road on Thursday afternoon, the heavy work of moving the cannon would require at least ten boys if it were to be done easily.

"We have one squad, that is, five," he admitted; "there's yourself, Dick, and I—and Tom"; there were loud giggles in the midst of the gloom, for Tom was as enthusiastic about hauling cannon as about presiding at meetings, or selling tickets. "And two of my staging committee have given their word they'll be there. Well, maybe we can do it, but it's a double job for five."

"I guess we'll have to do it, anyway," rejoined Dick. "Well, it'll be tedious, but those cannon aren't such large-bore guns

that they'll be impossibly heavy, especially if they're on wheeled carriages. It's mainly that it'll take us twice as long as it should."

"I guess those lazy people know that!" scolded Ethel. "I wonder what in the world has got into them? They won't even say they won't come! They say maybe, and perhaps, and possibly, in the most absolutely weak-minded way! But you can't count on them to do any work, though they're all willing enough to act, I'm sure. Do you know, not more than half a dozen of those older girls are coming to pick up the papers and stuff?"

"We'll have a job, too!" exclaimed Lucille, ruefully. "Battery Cape's pretty big, when you think of going over it inch by inch."

"I guess I'd better come," said Camilla, hesitatingly.

She was walking along beside Ethel, and had just been explaining that she was going into Hallett on Saturday to choose some special song for the opening number of the

pageant. She had, originally, been going to sing one of the school songs; but it had been decided that, for a Carleton town show, it would after all be more suitable to open with a song of wider appeal. And Camilla was therefore going to a large music-shop to select the most appropriate patriotic one to be found.

"Oh, no, Camilla," returned Ethel, "we don't need help as much as that."

"I think you will," insisted Camilla. "It's not only because the work is too hard for so few, though it is; it's because you'll never get it done in time. You know you won't."

"That," admitted Dick, "is what I should really be afraid of."

"But Camilla must go and choose her song! It's awfully important," insisted Ethel.

"It's not so important as clearing up the cape," declared Camilla; and she could speak very firmly, though she could not quite repress a little sigh that showed how much the

new song would mean to her. "I can sing one of the old songs quite well, you know; really, I can, and the audience wouldn't know the difference. Anyway, I've thought of something that might be done to fix things better."

She was urged on all sides to explain. It was quite true that the task of clearing the cape alone, should that have to be faced, would be enormous.

"We could rearrange the work," said Camilla. "We can get lots of little boys, and all the lower-grade girls, to pick up the papers. That's not hard work; and, if you like, I'll oversee them, and see that they don't get tired or into mischief ——"

"Who could be better?" cried Lucille.

"And then all the higher-grade boys,—there are a lot of them, you know,—and also we older girls, can help pull the guns. They're not so very heavy, as Dick says; and in a tug-of-war, you know, there's not much strain on anybody. So why not do that while we are about it?"

"As a plan, it's good," hesitated Will; "but I hate to have girls do work like that."

"Oh, nonsense!" scoffed Ethel. "It won't hurt any of us if we all do it. All I mind is Camilla's not getting her song."

"Don't think of that again!" ordered Camilla, speaking as lightly as she could. "I sha'n't really mind a bit, if everything else goes off well. So you think perhaps my little idea will work? Then we're out of the woods once more!"

As a patch of timber had just vanished behind the trampers, this bright remark was loudly applauded, and Camilla's gallant and unselfish spirit highly commended. Then the group of friends, on the outskirts of the town now, broke up. Camilla danced up the wooded pathway to her father's little farm, the boys went off for a swim, Ethel and Lucille proceeded up the highway leading over the hill toward their homes.

They discussed again "what had got into people," and agreed that it was an unfathomable mystery why the pageant should

threaten to languish at this point, as they went up a rather steep stretch that led to the first cottage on the hillside. This was a pretty little white one, set far back from the road, belonging to a family named Lee.

It had been closed for some months because Mr. and Mrs. Lee, an elderly couple whose children were all grown, had been away visiting their married daughter in the West. So nothing had been done that spring in the garden between the house and the road, and accordingly all the untrimmed plants and bushes were growing in luxuriant wildness. This was particularly true of the privet hedge which shut the garden off from the road.

Indeed, cut off thus, and with no trace of recent care, the garden looked quite solitary. Yet, as the girls passed, it seemed as if somebody must have been doing something special to cultivate that privet hedge. It was not even time for the sweet white blossoms to appear, and yet, through the thick-leaved twigs, a little distance above

the ground, could be seen what looked like a curious bright-pink flower! Ethel and Lucille turned to each other with almost the same words: "It's Alison's dress!"

"Nothing else is just that color," murmured Lucille. "What's she doing there?"

"She's very still."

"And the house is shut up, and she might be seen from the road. Let's go in and find out if there are any syringa-blossoms yet; Mrs. Lee asked Mother to pick her flowers," recollected Lucille.

Catching a full view of Alison, then, on their way to the syringa-bushes, they halted to greet her. But it was a doleful figure they saw, one that at first made no response whatever. But Alison was not crying; by no means. She was sitting on the grass behind the hedge, a fierce scowl on her brow, her hands clenched, her mouth one long, hard line. She was not, in fact, a pleasant spectacle, but Lucille approached her intrepidly.

"Is anything the matter, Alison?"

"Anything!" burst out Alison, as suddenly and violently as a pent-up stream might burst over a dam. *"Everything!"*

Lucille was so startled that she jumped back. Ethel came forward quickly.

"What, for instance?" she asked, politely. "Can't we do something?"

Alison was mute again. Then again she suddenly burst out: "I'm coming down to the cape on Saturday!"

"That's good," returned Ethel, at whom this announcement had been very brusquely hurled. She was evidently determined to get along with Alison, and to make Alison behave, too. "Maybe you can get some of the other girls to come with you."

"No!" snapped Alison, fiercely. "I've broken off with that whole crowd—forever!"

This declaration was sufficiently dramatic to startle even Ethel. She and Lucille stood staring down at the savage little social leader on the ground, unable to determine just what to say next. But Alison didn't

need any encouragement; something had enraged her all the way through, and she was eager to pour it out to any ear that would listen.

"They won't do a thing I say, just because my scheme didn't work—once; though Ginger's scheme all fell flatter than a pancake, and I can't see that he's suffering so indescribably! And so Mary's grabbed everything! Selfish, underhanded thing! It's what she was planning to do the whole time, I know now! So now they're just doing everything she says, like positive sheep!"

"What has she said to do?" demanded Ethel, grasping at the one intelligible phrase in this involved complaint.

"To stay away from clearing up Battery Cape!"

"You don't mean to say Mary Townsend's back of that refusal to come on Saturday?"

"I certainly do. She's just a politician."

"But I thought she liked the celebration!" protested Lucille, perplexed. Cer-

tainly Mary had seemed to like her part, and to work hard on her costume, and never, even when she favored cutting the program, to oppose the pageant directly in any way.

" She likes it because she thinks she's going to get something out of it," retorted Alison. " What is it she expects? Why, to run all our crowd, of course. She never thought she had enough to say about what the set did; so she thought if she could help Ginger and me to go on the rocks, and keep along with the people interested in the celebration, at the same time, she could be leader. No, I certainly do not mind telling you all this! She's no friend of mine any longer, and I despise Ginger, and everybody else in the crowd! I always shall!"

" Come, Alison," said Lucille, sitting down on the grass, " that kind of talk won't get you anywhere. And we are all in such difficulties about Saturday; can't you stop thinking about yourself just a little while, and try to help us? Certainly everybody in your crowd looked up to you until just

lately, if, indeed, people have ever stopped doing so. I can't believe they have."

Alison softened a little, and looked wistful.

"Mary's scheme's working," was all she said, however. "She's got the idea into people's heads that they shouldn't have to do low work like clearing up that messy cape, —that it's all right for people of a certain kind to do it, but that her crowd should save up their energies to make the show go off wonderfully with splendid acting."

"I don't doubt she's been successful in making a lot of lazy people believe such nonsense!" cried Ethel, outraged. "Of all selfish schemes! But what was that you were saying about schemes, Alison?—yours and Ginger's?"

Alison, perhaps even to her own surprise, answered this direct question with equal directness. Once she would have treated Ethel with haughty silence; now, Ethel had shown herself a person to be reckoned with. Anyway, it may have been a relief to Alison

to tell some one her sad experiences, reprehensible though they were.

"My scheme was to stop the pageant——"

"*What!*"

"A lot of us thought the wrong sort of people were to be too prominent in it, so I suggested filling up the committee on scenes mostly with people the judge wouldn't like, so he wouldn't help them. And then he did like them," frowned Alison, still rather bewildered by that fact, "and he didn't like me, and—and I guess that made me nervous——"

"I guess you had a bad conscience," said Lucille, with unusual severity; "I guess that made you nervous. How did you ever suppose that a man who knows as much as Judge Trenholm couldn't see through such doings? The other people on that committee were perfectly sincere, whatever shortcomings they had. That was why he liked them."

"Well, when I started, I really did think they were nearly all the wrong sort, and I

didn't want the wrong sort to run a Carleton celebration," returned Alison, defensively.

"Well, what then?" prompted Ethel.

"Then when the show went right on, Ginger tried to run it ——"

"Everybody knows about that."

"Yes. But all the time Mary was after something for herself. She made me go with the committee to the judge's, as a contrast to the other people; I do believe she thought I'd get that fit of giggles; anyway, she knew I might. Then she made me come and sew on costumes, so she could keep in with you people, and she backed Ginger's scheme to run things until it fell through, because if it had succeeded, she could have helped him until she got a chance to grab everything herself! And now she's making everybody but me do what she pleases."

"Of all the selfishness I ever heard of!" ejaculated Ethel, frankly, as this remarkable narrative of human weakness came to an end. "No wonder that crowd of yours never stuck together,—for it never really

did; it just followed one lead, and then another. And as for thinking you were the patriotic crowd in Carleton ——"

"Don't let's waste time talking about what's over," interrupted Lucille. "Alison's going to be independent now; and honestly, I don't know of anybody who really knows better *how* to be unselfish and public-spirited, and has more chance!"

Alison looked grateful; Ethel, too, realized that Lucille's helpful words implied that Alison's gifts and home endowed her with the ability to be an unusually fine girl and good leader, if she would use them properly. Perhaps Lucille saw that, so far, Alison knew only that she had failed; she didn't know how to change her wrong attitude to others. In a minute she said to her: "You couldn't possibly have written those clever rhymes for the treasure-hunt, or those wonderful verses of yours for the pageant, if you hadn't *known* how to act right."

"What do you mean?" scowled Alison,

not displeased, however, at the allusion to her gifts as a versifier.

"I was thinking of your introduction for the Indian scene, 'Friends though of alien race,'" answered Lucille; "and, indeed, of that beautiful verse for my own scene about Pamela Harrold: 'Her art and beauty were for all.' Alison, why don't you simply *do* what you *know?*"

The delinquent one gave a forlorn giggle, as if she wished she could.

"Alison," said Ethel, suddenly, "if you're coming on Saturday, you must really want to help the pageant. Couldn't you write a song for Camilla, so she won't be so badly disappointed?"

"Disappointed? How?"

"We've had to rearrange the work on the cape, because there aren't enough of the big boys sure of coming. We don't know whether or not we can get everything done in time, unless we girls, and some of the higher-grade boys, help Will's squad moving the guns. So Camilla has offered to

stay home from Hallett, and supervise the small children while they pick up the papers and clear the field," explained Ethel; "she'll sing one of the old songs, instead of getting a new one, though none of the old ones is quite so appropriate as we hoped, you remember."

"She offered to do that?" repeated Alison.

She flushed faintly; perhaps she realized how lavishly generous, with her small means, Camilla had been.

"Yes. Couldn't you write her a special song?"

"I certainly will," declared Alison, and she spoke both vigorously and with relief. "I'll find out to-morrow what music she wants, and write it specially, and help her arrange everything with Miss Page. And" —Alison was aroused, and spoke with all her assurance again—"*I'll make those boys come to the cape on Saturday!*"

"Oh, can you?" gasped Lucille.

"I'll fix them!" cried Alison. "I'll tell

them that *girls* have volunteered to move those guns! I'll tell them that if the people in this town see girls doing that sort of work because great enormous boys are too peevish and lazy to do it, though they're quite willing to act in the show after it's been done for them, they'll hear a few remarks they won't like! Say!" beamed Alison, preening herself a bit, "won't that be a joke on Mary! For if the boys go down, the girls will! Mary'll have to go herself!"

"Oh, Alison," said Lucille, deprecatingly, though she wanted to laugh, too, "this isn't a personal matter, you know. It's just a question of all of us getting together to put our town celebration over."

"I know that," agreed Alison, suddenly very sober again. "Well, I'll do all I can for it. I—I know I haven't acted right. Mother's been at me night and day about it!"

"Oh ——?" So Alison's mother was not quite so pleased with her as Alison wanted people to think, thought the two girls.

" She says she's been explaining to people for a month that I must have misquoted her, and she's tired doing it; she says she never saw such a tangled mind as I have," explained the culprit. " You know that time I said she had said representative people should take part in community celebrations? " The girls' thoughts flew back to Memorial Day, and they nodded. " Well, a lot of people heard me, of course, and they thought she must mean that only prominent people were representative."

" What else could they think? " wondered Lucille and Ethel, privately; " especially after the fuss that followed? "

" It made lots of unpleasant talk for Mother," continued Alison, " so she said I was very stupid not to realize that she'd meant *all* groups that make up a community should be represented by the best people in each group, and that ' representative ' meant worthiest, and not richest, or grandest, or most important in a social sense."

" Of course, your mother must have meant

that; she's so kind and nice to everybody," said Lucille, gently. "I'm sure lots of people must have thought you didn't get what she said quite straight that time, Alison. She'll be very much pleased with you, surely, if you can do such a lot for the pageant, now."

"I'll go right along and see what I can do," said Alison, rising.

The two girls saw she didn't want company any longer, so they lingered a minute on the green lawn behind the privet hedge. Privately, both of them may have recalled Smarty's estimate of Alison; she wasn't really very nice,—maybe she never would be. But there was a lot of good stuff and ability in her, and you had to take people as they were.

"Anyway," murmured Lucille, breaking the silence, "she is sincere, now. She sees how much harm she did, and she wants to stop. And certainly she was glad to get her mind untangled, and she'll go along straight now."

"She's the one smart member of that crowd," returned Ethel; "I believe she'll run it again, and run it right, this time. Well, it'll be no harm for that lot to have somebody to tell them what to do. Aren't they dull? How did I ever like them so much? I've had so much better times since I went my own way, and did something interesting and different!"

"You'll have another chance at that on Saturday afternoon," suggested Lucille, mischievously, as she scrambled up and pulled Ethel to her feet. "Fixing Battery Cape is going to be interesting and different! I don't believe any boys and girls ever did such a thing before. What will people say when it's done?"

"They'll say," answered Ethel, with conviction, "'Well, that wasn't such hard work, after all, was it?' Never mind! Carry on!"

CHAPTER XIV

SATURDAY AFTERNOON

At two o'clock on Saturday afternoon, Battery Cape was being prepared for the most amazing activities in all its long history.

Everywhere boys and girls were rushing over it, absorbed in work, oblivious of many interested watchers along the road. As a recruiting officer for workers, Alison had proved a huge success. Possibly her methods were firm rather than persuasive, but her results were incomparably good.

Ginger and all his cronies were present in force, sorting out rakes and shovels, helping Will cut lengths of rope for tow-lines, and showing marked eagerness to be included in hauling squads. Mary Townsend was helping Miss Page re-plan the staging arrangements she had once expressed such doubt about; she had made, in fact, an excellent

suggestion to have a parade of all the scenes as an inspiring opening number, since there could be no concealment for them, owing to the absence of curtains and wings. Alison and Camilla were working together, carrying down to the stage armfuls of white cords that were to mark its limits. The spirit shown all over the field was intensely serious and determined on success, and every one shared it. Smarty alone seemed able to chatter while he worked, and did both indefatigably.

"Did you hear what Tom did about the tickets? Well, it is a fine scheme. They're to be fifteen cents, instead of twenty-five, on account of people having to sit on the ground, and if they've already bought them for twenty-five, they'll get ten cents refund when they present them. And he's ordered a hundred extra tickets, because he must sell more, now ——"

"Sorry, Smarty!" interrupted Will, passing with a megaphone. "Everything seems to be ready. *A-a-a-tention!*"

Silence reigned.

"All ready, now!" shouted Will. "The boys on the squads to move cannon fall in as arranged. Squad 1 get ropes and haul the north gun over to the fence; Squad 2 do the same for the south gun. The girls start from the road to pick up rubbish and stones, the lower-school boys start doing the same thing from the shore, so the two groups will meet in the middle. One, two, three—go!"

Work started with a rush. At first it seemed as if the older boys had the easier task. The litter on the cape was considerable, and picking it up and carrying it away to pile on wheelbarrows waiting to convey it forever thence proved a tedious, if light, occupation. However, it was soon something of a satisfaction to see what a nice park Battery Cape might make, if it were only really a park.

In the meantime, Squad 1, five of the strongest boys, under the leadership of Dick, had tied strong ropes about the gun-car-

riage of the northernmost cannon of the five in the battery, and, giving a tremendous tug at a signal from their leader, were encouraged by a loud squeak from iron wheels turning for the first time in long years. A second tug started the wheels really going; and then, amid loud cheers, Squad 1 hauled the northern cannon in triumph to the fence between the cape and the dunes.

"Not so bad!" was the general verdict.

"Only, the holes where the wheels were look pretty terrible," said several voices. "Well, let's get some turf from up the road, and fill them in."

As the suggestion was favorably received, despite the fact that it meant more work, it seemed to everybody who had the pageant at heart—Lucille and Ethel, of course, especially—as if this final piece of work for it would go through successfully, no matter what difficulties might unexpectedly arise, as the way of difficulties was. More work might mean just so much more glory!

"Now for our next gun," said Dick,

loosening the ropes from the gun-carriage, and turning back toward the remainder of the battery. "Why, what's happened? Are those fellows in trouble?"

For Squad 2 had ceased operations, or, rather, had not yet begun them. Will, its leader, his group of helpers, and several of the girls who had halted work a moment, were pressing around the mouth of the southmost cannon, and peering in, one after another, with the greatest interest.

"What's happened?" demanded Dick, running up.

"Will has found a meadow-lark's nest, with the young birds, just inside the cannon's mouth," answered Mildred Wrenn. "The mother-bird must have left for a minute; she's sure to be right back."

"We can't move this gun," said Will; "the mother wouldn't know where to find the nest."

"Too bad," commented Dick, ruefully; "it takes up room right where the front row of the audience will be."

But he agreed with Will, as did the increasing number of curious spectators crowding up to see the sight, that the south gun would have to be left where it stood.

"Never mind," finally said Smarty, who had been examining the gun and its remarkable contents gravely; "my mother says that a nest of young birds means good luck. We should go on to the next gun."

This advice was to the point, and Squad 2 moved to the cannon next in line, just as the mother-bird came back to feed her little ones. Squad 1 tackled the neighbor of the gun so triumphantly dragged from its site a few minutes previously. Both squads now found they had to deal with cannon of slightly heavier calibre than the first, which had therefore sunk a little farther into the ground. The wheels of the carriages, in fact, were embedded several inches in the soil, and one of the boys had to go and borrow a shovel from the sandy "stage," and dig deep beneath the guns before either of them would budge. Even

then they came heavily away from the ground, and one of the ropes broke under the strain on it.

However, ultimately they were rolled up alongside of the first cannon, and then Miss Page suggested a short rest for all hands. The fifth cannon was the smallest, but the floor of its old wooden carriage had split and thrown the weight of the gun to one side, so that two of the wheels had sunk into the ground nearly their full height. Moreover, a thick clump of berry bushes was rooted beside the carriage, covering the other two wheels with dense shrubbery. It would be a hard task to dislodge this gun from its resting-place.

Moreover, the girls and the small boys were quite willing to stop bending over and picking up for a few minutes, so everybody rested by racing around the field at full speed, pitching balls, walking along the top of the fence, and shrieking as loud as possible to exercise fatigued lungs. Robert Mason's mother proved herself to be a most

delightful parent by sending over, from the gray house among the lilac-bushes, two large dishpans full of ginger cookies, and these proved very restful, also.

The girls, stimulated by these refreshments, seemed to make a more rapid recovery than the boys. In a few minutes, they started in to work again without being urged, and soon brought their job of clearing up the cape to completion. The field overlooking the blue bay was now a neat and most attractive spot. Spurred by success, and flushed with pride, they hurried down the hill in a body, to the semicircular space that was to be the scene of the production, and, seizing rakes, began to level the sands and smooth them.

"Come on, boys!" cried Will. "Don't let the girls beat us to anything. Get ropes, both squads; we'll need them all for this gun."

Both squads approached the half-sunken gun, and examined it. The wheels on the tilted side were so deeply embedded in the

ground that they would have to be dug entirely out. Several boys seized shovels, and scooped away valiantly, while others shouted answers to questions shouted up the hill and from the road, as to what was the matter with that last gun. It was a slow business, that digging, for the gun had turned over against a slightly buried rock, and that, too, had to be removed.

"Never mind, the other two wheels are entirely above ground," said Dick, tossing away a final shovelful of earth. "There, tie on the ropes, and step on it!"

So ropes were tied to the four axles, and the members of the two squads seized hold and pulled enthusiastically. But, strain as they might, shouting in chorus, tugging in rhythm, the gun would not budge an inch. It would not even creak, although all bent to the task with their utmost strength.

"Pshaw!" cried Will, examining the obstinate cannon again, from where he stood by the wheels that still were low in a rut. "It's out of balance, of course. Here,

everybody on the other side shove, and get it flat on the ground."

So the old gun-carriage was put as nearly on a level as its broken condition permitted. Once more the boys seized ropes, and pulled, with exactly the previous result. The gun remained firmly fixed on the ground.

By this time the valiant efforts of the two squads had drawn all the girls up the hill. Many spectators from the road pressed forward, too, and a large group surrounded the toiling boys, watching sympathetically. The townsfolk were particularly impressed with the earnestness with which the squads were attacking their problem, and offered numerous friendly suggestions.

"Why not leave the gun where it is? Folks can sit on it and alongside it."

"Yes, it won't do any harm there. Everybody'll realize you did your best."

"Sure! You can't help it if it won't move after all you've done."

"It's not worth so much trouble. Better put the work on something else."

But despite the fact that there was much sense in these kindly suggestions, Will and Dick and the boys under them all shook their heads. The girls, too, agreed with Will as he replied: "You see, this gun is right in the middle of the space before the stage. We're really bound to move it if we can. We must do our best for our audience. After all, giving the show here on Battery Cape is a makeshift arrangement."

So the gun was destined to be moved. And, after some minutes more of straining effort that was still without avail, a brilliant idea struck Dick with such force that he sat down flat on the ground and gasped.

"Good land, what chumps we all are!" he ejaculated. "Smarty, beat it down to the dock, and get some machine-grease from the fish-packing plant. We'd such an easy time with the other guns, we never thought of the simplest thing possible!"

For once Smarty showed great tact by returning so swiftly with the grease that nobody had time to feel too foolish. While

the boys were applying it to the wheels of the gun-carriage, Miss Page called to the girls to come down and finish the work below the hill, for the sun was beginning to go down. They trooped off, just as one of the boys suggested: "Here, oughtn't we to pull up these bushes that cover this side of the gun-carriage? They're in the way."

"Oh, let's leave them," said Dick. "They're pretty, and we don't want a big bare hole right in the middle of the field there."

"But they do obstruct the wheels; don't you see they do?"

"Then let somebody hold 'em down while we pull."

"We'll need everybody to pull if we're to get the gun out at all," declared Will.

"Then let's get help. Hey, Ethel!" called Dick. "Come back here a second, you and Lucille!"

The two girls, who were starting down the slope with the last group of their companions, returned. Dick explained.

"So will you two please hold the bushes back out of our way as we pull off? Will takes the steering-rope, and I take this rope on the back of the gun-carriage, to pull up when it starts and help keep the balance. The others all pull together when I give the signal. All ready, then!"

Lucille and Ethel knelt down and bent the shrubbery back from the pathway of the wheels. Dick gave a loud whistle, and jerked up his rope. Will and the other boys ran forward tugging on their ropes. The boards of the old gun-carriage clattered, the wheels turned at last! With a roar of triumph, the two squads of boys rushed on across the field, and wheeled the old cannon swiftly into line beside its companions near the fence. The spectators followed them, cheering and shouting congratulations. Battery Cape was cleared!

So no one saw Lucille and Ethel, still kneeling, long after the gun had moved, still holding back the berry-bushes, and staring open-mouthed at the spot where the cannon

had rested for so many years. For on that spot, tied up in what looked like a piece of an old slicker, lay a curious square, flat package.

So no one saw Lucille and Ethel, still kneeling, long after the gun had moved.—*Page 253.*

CHAPTER XV

FLAT AND SQUARE

FINALLY—perhaps in a few seconds, though it seemed like hours—Lucille raised her eyes and looked at Ethel, only to find Ethel, with saucer-eyes in a white face, staring back at her. From both girls broke the same whisper: "Do you remember ——?"

Lucille couldn't finish, but Ethel managed to do so.

—"what Captain Jim said?"

"'A square, flat package!'" breathed Lucille. "And, Ethel, the Gypsy was right here on Battery Cape ——"

"And he pointed to the *middle cannon,*" gasped Ethel. "Oh, Lucille, do you suppose that really can be the package that was under the old Gypsy's arm? What in the world do you suppose is in it?"

"Ought we to open it?"

"Not here," said Ethel, prudently; "we

must get this work finished, whatever happens." At this moment shouts were heard from the beach. "Yes, yes! What is it?"

"Is the big hammer up there?" called one of the girls. "We want to drive the stakes to hold the cords."

"Yes, there it is," called Lucille, standing up despite shaky knees, and glancing around the now tidy and attractive field; "over by the fence ——"

"I'll bring it down," shouted Ethel, dashing off. As she returned with the hammer in hand, she whispered: "I'll be right back, and we can decide what must be done. Throw your sweater over it, Lucille; don't let anybody see it yet. What would those boys do if they knew we'd unearthed buried treasure!"

The boys, however, considered the final dislodgment of the cannon as the completion of their afternoon's work, and were busily occupied in going home. And Ethel, when she came racing breathless up the hill again, reported that Miss Page had told her to go

home, too, and take Lucille with her. They had done enough for the afternoon, she said, and all the girls would be going within a few minutes, for all the work was nearly done, and most satisfactorily.

"And now," asked Lucille, gazing at the package she had uncovered again, "what shall we do with this thing? Whose is it, and what is it?"

"I tell you," suggested Ethel; "let's go after Dick and Will, and see what they think. We don't want everybody to know we've found something, at least not right away, in case it should be the package in Captain Jim's story. You know he said we were the only people he'd ever told that story to, so maybe he mightn't want it to get all over. But of course those two boys heard it, too."

"Quite right," agreed Lucille. "Then let's take the package with us, and show it to them. Oh, Ethel, help me lift it!"

She gasped out the last sentence with a jerk, for such an unexpected tug as it took

to raise the flat package from the ground! Ethel sprang forward, and together the two girls lifted the treasure carefully to the grass.

"Mercy, it's heavy!" cried Ethel.

"It's—hard," murmured Lucille, perplexedly.

Ethel merely urged her briefly to come on. So the two hurried down the road after the boys as fast as they could with their burden.

When cheerful whistling floated back on the late afternoon breeze, Ethel called out to Dick. He answered her; next moment he and Will, returning in the direction of the hail, were seen approaching around a bend in the road.

"What have you there?" cried Dick.

"We don't know!" gasped the girls.

"Give it here!" ordered Will, helping Dick rescue the heavy package. "What's all this?"

Ethel sank down by the roadside, and tried to get her breath back, as she gasped:

"Boys, what do you think? You mustn't tell a soul, at least, not yet, but we found that package under the middle cannon, after you had dragged it away!"

"*Under the middle cannon!*" repeated both boys in concert.

"Yes!" cried Lucille, excitedly. "Do you remember what Captain Jim told us, that day we went fishing?"

"Let's see it!" cried Dick, seizing the string around the package.

Will stopped him, however.

"We'd better not open it here," he warned; "folks might come along. Let's take it somewhere private."

"To Captain Jim's," suggested Lucille.

"Gracious, he lives nearly over at the Point," protested Ethel.

"But he's the person to take it to ——"

"Say," interrupted Dick, whose curiosity was getting the better of him, "what is this thing, anyhow? It's heavy, and flat, and hard ——"

As he spoke, he thumped it with an ath-

letic fist. Will followed suit. And from the flat package there came forth a shrill, faint reverberation.

Everybody jumped; Lucille and Ethel clutched each other. The boys at once thumped again, inquiringly, and again there sounded that rather thin, faint ringing noise such as a sheet of metal might give forth.

Awed silence fell on the group. The wind in the trees had died away; even the waves of the blue harbor, far away in the dim rays of a sun going down behind mauve and deep-blue clouds, seemed scarcely to move. The two girls and the two boys, standing there on the roadside, around the package on the grass, stared wildly at one another, first in consternation, then in hope. Four pairs of lips had just parted to express that hope in a panting whisper, when around the bend of the road came racing, at a pace which Will and Dick could scarcely have outdone, Captain Jim Higgins himself, waving something rapturously.

"Hurray!" he cried. "Hurray-ray-ray!

What did I tell you? Didn't I always say so? Who knew, that time? Hurray!"

The package was forgotten. Whatever ailed Captain Jim? What could he be talking about so excitedly? Perhaps the amazement on four young faces asked all necessary questions as the captain came up, for he began of his own accord to explain.

"Ben's coming home!" he cried, waving again the mysterious object which now appeared as a radio message. "He's coming home on a visit next week! See, here he's sent me this message:

"'I keep my word. Arriving Monday.' Yes, I said my boy'd keep his word if he got a chance. He's coming back to Carleton!"

"He'll keep his word!" murmured Lucille, puzzled, and so low that perhaps nobody heard her, for nobody responded. It may have been that everybody else was equally mystified by this most curious development of that strange, wonderful afternoon. For Ben Porter's return, as every-

body in the little town knew, hinged on a condition: "I'll come back," Ben had said in his wounded anger, "when this old dump of a town comes back!" So—was Carleton really "coming back" to prosperity and progress? And—how? Or, rather, perhaps—why? And, most curious of all, how did Ben know anything about it? Even Captain Jim hadn't suggested answers to these questions.

Five thoroughly bemused persons stood on the roadside, wrapped in thought, for what seemed a long time. At last Ethel, always ready for action, broke the silence.

"How lovely for you, Captain Jim, that your grandson's coming! I guess we were all so happy for you that we just weren't able to say so!"

"I knew folks would feel that way," replied the gratified old man, "even if they never agreed with me that Ben would come back. To tell you the truth, I came all this way to tell the last person that didn't believe me, when I said that very thing, that

she was all wrong! Where'd you young folks leave Miss Page?"

"At Battery Cape," replied Lucille; "she's been working there all afternoon, ever so hard. We simply couldn't have done a thing with that pageant without her, could we, Ethel?"

"No," agreed Ethel; "she's rehearsed and sewed and supervised things night and day. She hasn't gone home yet, either, for she hasn't passed us on the road, so you'll find her at the cape, Captain Jim ——"

"No, here she comes now," interrupted Will.

Miss Page's slim, bright-haired figure was approaching the roadside group a little wearily. The sun's last rays were in her eyes; she could not see anything distinctly until she was nearly up to the young folks and the captain. Then she gave a bright smile of recognition, which frankly became questioning; for the boys and girls said nothing, feeling that the captain must break his own news.

"What's happened?" asked Miss Page. "Something nice?"

Captain Jim handed her his wireless message.

"What do you think?" he inquired.

Miss Page read the brief sentence, and stared. She read it again, and gasped. She read it a third time, lifted her eyes, and gazed at Captain Jim without a word. The girls and boys, having by this time recovered from their own amazement, giggled gayly as they watched her astonishment. Then the astonishment changed to the sweetest, gayest smile, as the captain repeated, mischievously, "Well! What do you think?"

"I think," replied Miss Page, "that something very nice has happened!"

"Something you never believed would happen, eh?" inquired the captain, triumphantly.

"I couldn't say 'never'!"

"But you didn't believe me that time I told you Ben would keep his word—that day we were talking at the school gate."

Miss Page reflected.

"No," she admitted; "I didn't—then—I must confess!"

"Then when did you?"

She pondered again, with a queer little roguish smile, as she glanced around the listening group. Then she put out her slim hand, and pressed Captain Jim's wrinkled old one in affectionate congratulation as she started off down the road quite briskly, instead of at the weary pace with which she had approached.

"I changed my mind three weeks ago!" she called back gayly; and was gone.

But there was no time to wonder what she meant. Lucille and Ethel and Dick and Will suddenly recollected the mysterious package on the grass by the road, and in breathless, excited, confused whispers, that soon rose to shrieks, began, all at once, to tell Captain Jim all about it.

"Yes, under the middle cannon ——"

"And you see it's a square, flat package ——"

"Does it look like the one you saw, Captain Jim?"

"Does it, does it? Oh, oh, oh, how wonderful!"

"And Captain Jim, didn't you say it was forty years ago that that happened?"

"Do you think, really, it could be the same package you saw forty years ago? Do you, honestly?"

"Listen, Captain Jim: it *rings!*"

"Oh, Captain Jim!" cried Ethel, unable to restrain her impatience any longer; "what *do* you think it is?"

"I couldn't say," returned the captain, cautiously; but he smiled, too, just as hopefully as his young friends were smiling.

"Open it, open it!" begged the boys. "We were just going to bring it over to your house, Captain. Open it!"

The captain shook his head. "Not here," he decided, still cautiously. "But don't be disappointed too quick. I've a better plan than taking it all the way over to my house."

"What is it?" demanded the quartet, eagerly.

"S'pose we take it up to Judge Trenholm's, and open it there. Think he'd like to see it, maybe?" suggested the captain, cunningly. "He's town-council chairman, you know; it might interest him!"

"Splendid!" shouted Lucille and Ethel and Dick and Will in delight.

And eight hands contended for the privilege of carrying the heavy flat package triumphantly down the long road through Carleton, and up the hill.

CHAPTER XVI

"THE TALE OF CARLETON"

SMOOTHING out her blue smock, and making sure that the black-velvet bow on her quaint white cap was exactly straight, Lucille stepped forward along the road just this side of Battery Cape, and touched Ethel's arm.

"Ethel," she whispered, "it's really going to begin. Can you believe it?"

"No," answered Ethel, with conviction. She did, indeed, seem at the moment as nearly dazed as such a clear-headed, capable girl, most suitably attired in a becoming Red Cross uniform, could be. "Lucille, how I have worked for this moment! But I always wondered if it would ever come."

"But doesn't everybody look wonderful?" suggested Lucille, trying to get a hold on reality as she glanced up and down the road, where the whole school, dressed in all

the colors of the rainbow, and all the styles of two centuries, were waiting the signal to start down to the foot of the cape. "And did you ever see such an audience!"

"That's no surprise, though," declared Ethel, letting her eyes roam over the throngs of visitors covering the cape, from the roadside itself to the cliff, and down the slope to the very edge of the roped-off semicircle of sand that was the stage. "Nobody could have helped us the way your father did, with notices in the *News*. I'm not surprised that there are strangers here from all over the county."

"Oh, I hope it's going to be good!"

"Brace up! This is a good time to lose your nerve! Look, Lucille! Do you see Camilla's father anywhere?"

Lucille pointed down the hill.

"Right there in the front row. Doesn't he look proud? Well, just wait until Camilla comes on! Oh, Ethel, did you hear? Tom says nobody will take back money on the twenty-five-cent tickets, and he's made

just barrels of it! Nobody seems to mind sitting on the ground ——"

"No, there's Judge Trenholm by the south gun, and there's Captain Jim right in front of the stage, at the left. Mercy, who's that with him? Not ——"

"Certainly; it's Ben Porter; he got home last night."

"What a stunning uniform!" cried Ethel, admiring with expert taste the gold-braided blue suit worn by the tall young man seated beside Captain Jim. "Lucille, how do you know about him? You've been talking to Smarty!"

"No, he's been talking to me! He had a vast fund of details about Captain Jim's grandson, I assure you. Oh, Ethel! Are you sure the bouquet is ——"

"Now, that's all attended to," Ethel informed her, in a tone that dismissed that topic. "And what else is on your mind?"

"Ethel," whispered Lucille, refusing to be teased, "aren't you worried because we haven't heard another thing about ——"

"Sh-h-h!"

"I know the judge said he'd announce it at the right time, but there's been nothing more said about it, and he was so dazed that evening we brought it to him ——"

"Everybody—fall—in!"

The megaphone order put an end to wayside gossip. The new school band, confident after many rehearsals, played its bravest, and the procession was off to tell "The Tale of Carleton." Down the cape and around the semicircle of the stage the bright spectacle moved, amid enthusiastic cheers and not a few personal greetings from the audience.

Then, as the procession halted at one side, Mildred Wrenn came forward. She had been chosen as Historian, and wore a stately cap and gown, in keeping with the dignified office which called on her to introduce all the episodes of Carleton's story. In one hand she held a great scroll, which typified the history she was about to unroll.

"Friends of Carleton," she said, "we

students are to-day recalling the history of our beloved town since its foundation two centuries ago.

" From a glorious past to a glorious present, these two centuries have led us.

" Toward a glorious future we shall go forward, if the spirit of Liberty shall continue to lead us."

She stepped aside; and on the stage swept Camilla.

On her white frock gleamed a tricolor sash; on her shining curls, a Liberty cap; on her charming little face, her own lovely smile. Her scarlet lips parted, and in silvery tones that rang far up the hill, she sang the song that Alison had written especially for her. It was called " The Golden Sands of Carleton," and the last two lines of the chorus predicted that the true spirit of liberty would always bring

> " A Golden Age of love and peace
> To Carleton's golden sands."

To the general delight of everybody, and the

author's special gratification, the audience caught up the last chorus, and sang it with Camilla.

Then followed the eight episodes that made up the pageant, each introduced by Mildred, and interspersed pleasantly with band selections, choruses, and recitations.

First, headed by Will, the Norsemen in their shining armor once more arrived in Carleton. Moreover, they carried with them a stone tablet which, tradition said, they had set up on the beach as a record of their arrival in 1000 A. D. One of the boys had remembered that this stone was gathering dust in the cellar of the town hall. It had been dragged out, scrubbed, its mysterious markings emphasized with a little charcoal, and it was now borne to the center of the stage in triumph. Loud cheers greeted it, and the past glories it commemorated, as the proud Vikings made way for their successors.

These were a picturesque tribe of Indians, who had been good friends during the hard-

ships of the early settlers. The Red Men and their families were depicted listening, with praiseworthy attention, to the instructions of a schoolmaster who was leading them toward better ways. Here Ginger appeared, as one of the less instructed Indians. But in his fine costume he made a handsome young brave, and it could be noted that he seemed to be minding his book, and trying hard to improve.

The third episode recalled Revolutionary days, for it showed Lafayette returning to greet his old comrades-in-arms from Carleton, during his farewell journey. The local heroes appeared in their worn Continental uniforms. They, with many pretty Carleton belles in flowered costumes and poke bonnets, gave the gallant Frenchman a reception that was itself loudly applauded in turn.

But it was the scene that followed which brought the audience to its feet. The shipbuilders that had helped to hew and build the first American navy came on the stage,

hammering a half-finished wooden ship. In short order, the flag was run up, and then a second vessel bearing the skull and cross-bones at the masthead was towed on. Forthwith ensued a most remarkable naval battle; for, while general attention had been distracted by the entrance of the second ship, the shipbuilders, with the aid of blue middies and ribboned caps, had suddenly become American sailors. As the Barbary pirates, who manned the second vessel, had draped themselves in all the best fancy blankets and couch-covers in the town, the battle-scene was a colorful spectacle. While brief, it was most earnestly fought, but the pirates were duly vanquished in short order, and towed off in their vessels as prisoners of war, while the audience verged toward hysterics.

And yet the spirit in which that scene had been planned and carried out was so earnest, the effect so vivid and full of life, that really respectful applause followed the laughter. And loudest of all in the applause for Smarty's wonderful effort was the young

man in the blue uniform, who was sitting next Captain Jim.

When the cheers finally died away, a charming contrast to the scene of warfare appeared, in the story of Pamela Harrold. Few towns had a more distinguished woman citizen, thought the spectators, as they watched the dainty, girlish figure of Lucille weaving at a hand-loom. For stones and ships might become dim memories, but the memory of Pamela Harrold had never faded from Carleton, though it was a hundred years since that lovely and brilliant girl, a poor orphan, had won herself fame with artistic gifts she could not afford to cultivate formally. Using them, however, to invent the curious weaves and perfect the beautiful dyes she made from local plants, Pamela Harrold had begun the industry of cloth manufacture now known countrywide as "Carleton homespun." The tribute to this scene proved that its memories ranked perhaps first in the heart of Pamela's home.

Then the audience was amused again with

a most realistic and up-to-date scene showing Carleton's own great stand-by, the fisheries, "from hook and line to packing case," as Mildred announced. Local pride swelled. But it was to swell still further at the last scene, the climax of the performance.

Back on the stage the seven foregoing groups filed, taking up positions along the background, with Liberty in the center. Against this vivid setting appeared, one by one, the representatives of "Our Own Day of Peace and Service," as the scene had been announced. Dick led the procession, carrying the flag; he was loudly applauded. Ethel followed him, in the uniform which symbolized service to humanity; and after her came a stalwart farmer, a busy housewife, a carpenter bristling with squares and saws, a mechanic with his tools, a learned-looking teacher,—all representative of a town's busy daily life. And finally came a charming, happy group of schoolboys and schoolgirls, exactly as they could be seen any

day along the road, who typified, as all could see, the happy and prosperous future of Carleton.

With a final inspiring chorus echoing over the hill, "The Tale of Carleton" ended. Nor was the smallest tribute to its success the fact that the audience gazed in complete silence for a full minute at the brilliant spectacle still before them, before starting a last round of hand-claps. But before the applause could die, it was interrupted.

There had been slight scurryings and exchanges of anxious glances at the edge of the stage toward the cliff, and now two of the little girls came forward from that point, firmly leading Miss Page, who looked protesting and bewildered. Shouts from all over the stage greeted her; she was conducted straight down to the center front of the stage, and Ethel stepped to her side, bearing an enormous bouquet of roses which had mysteriously appeared from some hiding-place.

"Miss Page," said she, "these are from

all the girls and boys with their love and thanks and appreciation for everything you've done for us, and for Carleton. We want everybody to know that if you hadn't believed in us, and helped us, to-day would never have happened!"

For the first time on record, Miss Page was at a loss for something to say. She took the roses and stood perfectly still an instant, with the sun haloing her bright hair, a smile on her face, indeed, but so surprised and touched by the tribute that words failed her. And then the young man in the blue uniform, sitting next Captain Jim, saved the day.

"Speech!" he shouted, springing to his feet as mischievously as one of the boys on the stage might have done. "Speech! Speech!"

"Hurray!" cried Captain Jim, clapping loudly. "Speech!"

All over the stage and the hill the cry went up, with loud cheers and laughter. Miss Page shot a reproachful glance toward

the young man in the blue uniform; he seemed quite unrepentant. Indeed, he smiled most complacently. So Miss Page smiled, too; and then the noise and disorder brought her to herself. She joined in the laughter, and, raising a hand to quell it, gave in gracefully.

"This lovely tribute is a complete surprise to me," she said, sweetly. "Girls and boys, I cannot tell you how I thank you for it, though I feel I do not deserve it. For it was not I, dear friends"—she turned to the audience—"who made to-day happen. But the people who did that include everybody else on this stage!"

"There's glory enough to go around," said Mr. Lowrie, stepping forward as Miss Page retired, with her roses. "If I may make just one announcement, I shall then call on our eminent fellow-citizen, Judge Trenholm, to tell us just what to-day has brought us all. I wish to announce that this performance has cleared the sum of sixty-four dollars and fifty cents, and it has been

suggested from several student quarters that this sum ought to be given to the town for some public benefit. Consequently, the school will shortly be called on to vote how they wish this first money they have made expended for Carleton."

This announcement was greeted enthusiastically, especially by the school! Then, with a courtly bow, Judge Trenholm arose from his seat by the south gun and walked up on the stage, smiling with a graciousness which was one of the biggest surprises of that surprising day. He beckoned to two boys stationed at the right of the stage. They left it, and immediately reappeared, bringing on a little table, which they placed at the judge's side.

The mystified audience, quite silenced, then saw one of the boys return with a flat, square package, which he laid carefully on the table. Then the judge faced around toward the performers, who were still grouped along the background.

"Will Miss Lucille Douglas," he in-

quired blandly, "kindly step to the front row, and hold herself in readiness to act when she is called on?"

And so Lucille, amazed and trembling, but managing to return the judge's smile, stepped forward amid the astonishment of her comrades and the whole audience, and listened as the judge began his speech.

CHAPTER XVII

THE HOME-COMING

"THIS day," said Judge Trenholm, with impressive sincerity, "is the happiest of my whole life, as I believe it must be for every one present. For it is the day, dear friends, when this beautiful town of ours, our beloved home, has shown its resolve to press forward to a future history as glorious as that which is past.

"I will not detain you long, for, surely, after what our young people have done today, there is not much that an old man can either do or say. But I have three pleasant duties to perform before we part.

"First, I am authorized to make an announcement from the town council. When we learned of the efforts of our boys and girls to make Battery Cape, long such an eyesore, into a place suitable for public assembly; when we saw the neat and attrac-

tive results of their efforts; we decided, at our last meeting, that such work should be made permanent. Therefore, plans for appropriations to keep the cape in good condition as a public park are now under way. We hope that soon everybody will be coming out here often, to take the sea air!"

The judge's little joke was as popular as his announcement, and when laughter let him go on, he was still in a happy vein, though it was serene rather than gay.

"For some time," he proceeded, "it has seemed to me that Carleton has many young people eager to learn and progress—very many. I think we have not appreciated this fact, we older people; certainly we have provided them with few opportunities to fulfill their ambitions. I may say that this fact was called to my attention by one of our boys who regularly cleans fish on the docks so he may get carfare into Hallett to read in the public library there."

Everybody looked at Will, but Will looked only at the judge.

"So, as I am privileged to have the opportunity, I propose to remedy this condition, so far as I personally can. In the east wing of my house, as so many of you know, there are two large communicating rooms. They were formerly my son Ralph's rooms. He," continued the judge gently, as his hearers gave him particularly sympathetic and respectful attention, "was a Carleton boy, who did his best. I should like to think that in the future our boys and girls will be helped to do their best in those rooms where he lived. They are well adapted for use as public rooms, and I have offered them to the town council as the first home of what I hope will some day be a splendid public library. With them goes a fund of a thousand dollars to start the purchase of books. I asked that this offer might be made public on this occasion, so that the young people could hear of it before they scatter on vacation. I believe when they come together again in the fall, they will find their library awaiting them.

"And now," said the judge, after his magnificent and touching gift had been acknowledged with an admiring gratitude such as he could have seldom experienced before, "I must temporarily leave the young folks. I call especially on the older people to prepare themselves to hear unexpected and most welcome news, the greatest triumph of this wonderful day. Fellow-citizens, after an absence of forty years—forty years of misunderstanding and trouble and lagging behind—Carleton's silver plaque has come back!"

A moment the whole audience sat dazed, scarcely understanding the words. Then a thrill ran through the crowd, people stared, looked wildly at one another, gasped. Some one cried out, "Where is it?"

"Here on this stage," replied the judge, waving his hand toward the table.

"What brought it back?" now cried several voices.

"These young folks on this stage!" answered the judge, waving toward them.

"As has been well said, there is glory here for all; but as Miss Lucille Douglas originally had the idea of holding this pageant to celebrate Carleton's founding, I now call on her to untie this package."

Lucille's knees trembled so terribly that she could hardly walk the distance to the table. Somehow she managed it, however, and with shaking fingers untied the loosely-knotted cord that held the old slicker around the flat square package. Then, with a high-beating heart, amid dead silence, she returned to her place.

The judge unwrapped the package, and held up the contents. Glittering in the summer sunlight appeared, before the wondering eyes of the audience, a large plaque of brilliant silver. All the metal-polish in the judge's house, all the elbow-grease of four strong boys and girls, had gone to shine that plaque, the evening it had been borne from Battery Cape up the hill. Those of the audience near the stage could read the inscription, in curious, old-fashioned Eng-

lish lettering, and all the old-timers recognized with gasps of satisfaction the quaint adornment of the Carleton codfish which commemorated the famous exploit of the heroic fishermen.

"This plaque," said the judge, breaking the silence, "lay hidden, until last Saturday, for forty years, under the central gun of the old battery yonder on the cape.

"It was saved to us, I believe, through an act typical of the best Carleton spirit. Forty years ago, our beloved Captain Jim Higgins, at considerable risk to himself, saved the life of a little Gypsy boy, and restored the child to his family, who were secretly camped for the night on Battery Cape. One of that family, as Captain Jim has related to me, had undoubtedly stolen the silver plaque from the town hall. He had done it so skillfully that no trace was ever found of the crime; as my older friends will remember, no one has ever known how the plaque disappeared. But, as we also believe, the child's father got possession of the

plaque from the thief, and, in gratitude for Captain Jim's brave act, left it in Carleton, under the central gun.

"Forty years ago that gun was not sunk into the ground as it was found last Saturday; for, beyond a doubt, the Gypsy had noticed its placement and decided there was a good hiding-place for the plaque below it. The trouble was, to give Captain Jim a clue regarding the hiding-place. What clue he could give him, he did. But it was by necessity faint, for doubtless he feared to be involved in the disappearance of the plaque. Accordingly, it was never understood where had been the hiding-place of the silver plaque.

"Captain Jim had shown this Gypsy, a member of an alien race, an outstanding act of brotherhood. So, 'Brotherhood,' said the Gypsy, pointing toward that central cannon, 'shall be the secret of this soil, so long as the head, the hand, and the heart rule together!' To him, as to us, the plaque was the symbol of such brotherhood; unquestion-

ably he hoped that we could trace the symbol to that spot in our soil.

" But this was not to be, until our young folks did it a few days ago. In the face of differences and opposition, a few far-seeing, generous spirits—encouraged by teachers to whom we, fellow-citizens, owe the greatest gratitude—succeeded in winning their whole group of comrades to a patriotic effort for this town. Overcoming innumerable difficulties, these young folks gradually united their wills, their strength, and their varying talents to bring this celebration into being.

" Their last and hardest task was to clear Battery Cape. They performed it. Their performance brought back to Carleton its great treasure, which you see here before you,—our talisman, the silver plaque! But, dear friends, what brought back that plaque was a treasure far greater than any trophy could possibly be; it was, in fact, the old, priceless possession which won the plaque in the first place: the heroic spirit of unselfish service.

"Friends, may brotherhood again, from this day, be the secret of our soil! Division and difference between citizens of the same town is surely as out of date as that antique cannon yonder, which, no longer in battle, has become the home of singing birds. If we have come here from different places, and have different ideas of how to live, let us ever remember the great history of achievement behind us, and henceforward sink our differences, and build soundly and confidently for the future. Let us, in short, unite our own efforts under the wise, inspiring, progressive rule of heart, head, and hand! We have before us the example of how to do so; let us follow it!"

Judge Trenholm, lifting the silver plaque again, took a step forward, and gave a beckoning glance around the audience. The members of the town council rose from their places, and, coming forward in a body, joined him as he stepped from the stage.

"The plaque is to be returned to its place in the town hall," he announced. "After

this escort has reached the road, all those present are invited to march up to the hall, and see our treasure home!"

Never was there a more popular suggestion. The crowd rose quickly, and, in orderly fashion, fell in along the road behind the council. The band struck up a march, and, following directions from the megaphone, the whole pageant fell in too, in the formation decreed for dismissal, and, instead of breaking ranks, swept up the cape and along the road to Carleton Green.

"Wait just one minute—oh, please do wait for me!"

It was a breathless Ethel who had seized the opportunity provided by a brief halt in the march, to keep out of the dust made by the audience's trampling feet, and to run up the road to seize Lucille's arm. She drew her aside, and squeezed the arm hard and affectionately.

"Oh, Lucille, wasn't it wonderful! Such a surprise, wasn't it, the way the judge opened the package? And I'm so, so happy

that he chose you to untie it! You were the one person to do it!"

"Oh, Ethel, if you knew how perfectly happy I am!" sighed Lucille. "But it seemed like too much honor. Think how hard everybody else worked! Yourself, for instance, Ethel; why, you certainly did at least twice as much actual work as I. You deserve a bigger reward still!"

"I think I've got it!" smiled Ethel.

"What do you mean?"

But Ethel would only laugh, and shake her head mysteriously. "This isn't a good time to tell you, Lucille. Later on, I will tell you all about it."

"I must say there are a lot of things I don't understand about these last weeks yet, —I mean, since we've been getting up the pageant," sighed Lucille, when teasing had failed to budge Ethel from her resolution. "How did Ben Porter happen to come back just at this time? How did he know Carleton was coming back, as it seems it is going to do? Why didn't he write last month?

And if we have come back, how are we going to be different?"

"Wait, wait!" laughed Ethel. "I don't know the answers to those questions, either, but I guess we'll find them out, too, later on. In the meantime, isn't the silver plaque enough?"

It was for the throng on the road, for they were now marching forward again, and kept up a steady pace until they drew up in front of the old gray town hall. Far off in the dazzling sunlight the waves of blue Hallett Bay shone and danced their brightest, and on Carleton Green the trees, now just full-leaved, rustled in merry chorus in a soft salt breeze. To the gay crowd of Norsemen, Indians, patriots, fishermen, workers of ancient and modern days, and the less spectacularly clad, but equally important citizens of all ranks, Carleton seemed the best place in the world that happy day.

And in a moment the town council filed out on the upper balcony of the hall, with Judge Trenholm in their midst, holding the

plaque. But now it was restored to the frame which had originally held it, a dark, heavy bit of ebony, that had for many years lain in the dust of the town-hall cellar, but now reappeared as the setting for the great trophy.

Seeing this, the crowd cheered, and cheered, and cheered again. For the frame had spoken a message that all had understood: the talisman of Carleton was prepared to return to its own place, to be the inspiration, the guide, as well as the pride, of future days! Carleton's silver plaque was home, to stay!

CHAPTER XVIII

SILVER AND GOLD

Bright June had become brighter July several days ago, when, one warm afternoon, Ethel crossed the road to Lucille's house, with a very determined look on her face.

She saw Lucille on the porch, lying in the hammock, reading. She crept up the steps unheard, stole along behind her friend, stretched out two firm, capable hands, and slammed the book shut. Then, "Come on!" cried Ethel. "Let's go somewhere and do something!"

"All right," agreed Lucille, with the sweetest and most disappointing amiability. "Where? And what?"

"Well, we cannot go to Battery Cape —"

"No, it's all roped off, and the workmen are still digging and levelling it. And oh, Ethel, I passed it this morning, and they're

going to arrange flower-beds in the park the prettiest way! They'll be like this ——"

"That'll do for Battery Cape for the present. We're going somewhere to do something," repeated Ethel, blocking the enthusiastic hand that was reaching out for a pencil to reproduce the flower-bed design. "We can't go there, and we can't stroll down the beach road in the hope of being treated by our young friend Bob Mason, as I hear he is called since his pirate act went over so successfully."

"Why not? Oh, yes, he must be at Judge Trenholm's this afternoon with the library committee that's helping the judge choose books for the new library, as per invitation."

"And we can't go fishing with Captain Jim ——"

"Not to-day. It's the last day of Ben's leave, and the captain's spending it ashore with him. I saw them out together this morning, and they said that Ben must go back to-morrow."

"And we can't go treasure-hunting, that I know of."

"Nor I; but we have done a good deal of that, lately!"

"So, Lucille," finished Ethel, in a severe tone, "since it was that plan of yours which has resulted in exhausting all our sources of amusement, it is certainly up to you to think of where we shall go and what we shall do!"

"That's easy!" cried Lucille, bounding out of the hammock. "We'll go to the south beach and go in swimming. I didn't exhaust the ocean, anyway!"

Without another word, Ethel dashed back across the road for her bathing-suit, and Lucille up-stairs for hers. Next moment they were swinging down the road up which they had so often toiled in the last few weeks, on important errands like visiting a distinguished citizen, straightening out tangled plans for public progress, and getting a thrilling discovery identified.

Their stroll was quiet, for some time, indeed, quite without interruption. Many of

the Carleton girls had already gone to a mountain camp where Ethel and Lucille were to join them, for a month, the following week. A bend in the road that gave the first view of the docks showed them Will's strong, stocky figure sturdily working on them, and reminded them that Dick, too, following his friend's inspiring example of industry, had resolved to spend his vacation working under his father's direction in the big fish-packing plant.

"Everybody's pleased about that," confided Ethel; "of course Dad and Mother are delighted that he finally saw there was a good business chance for him here, and now that he does something for himself, he's ever so much interested in the work. You know, Lucille, that's a big secret of success, I find: have something of your own to do, and do it in a way nobody else can do it."

"Wise, wise Ethel!" declared Lucille. "I wonder if that is the reward you said you had received, right after the pageant, and refused to describe any farther? It

must be. Well, modest as you are, I have heard that every one said the costumes you made—should I not say, created?—were at least half the show. These things will get around, my dear!"

"Oh, nonsense, that isn't what I meant!" cried Ethel. "No, I was referring to Camilla, but I couldn't talk about her just then."

"Why, what's happened about her? I haven't seen her since that day."

"I heard what her father said to Miss Page, when our scene was waiting to fall in. He came up with his arm around Camilla, beaming with smiles, and said: 'My girl can go on with school; she must be teacher, like you!'"

"Ethel, how wonderful! Ethel Merriam, I believe you planned that presentation of the bouquet to Miss Page on purpose to impress Mr. Caro! He probably thinks teachers get presents like that every day, and wants Camilla to!"

"No, I didn't!" denied Ethel, laughing a

little self-consciously, however. "I planned it because we all wanted to do something for Miss Page; I did hope, I admit, that it would be a kind of climax that might incidentally finish off Mr. Caro. That, I couldn't count on; but it was effective, I guess, and anyway, he's going to let Camilla go on studying, and have her career. And I guess, Lucille, that bad feeling that threatened to divide the town over that silly fuss about the flag—do you remember, Miss Page mentioned it to us?—has all disappeared. Camilla's family have lots of friends that work for Dad, and he says that for several days now, after closing-time at the plant, a number of them have gone to the cape to help until dark, for nothing, with the work there. The town will belong to all of us, at this rate, some day, I'm sure. And I only hoped to help Camilla! Yes, I've had my reward."

There was a short silence, spent by Lucille in thinking what a splendid girl Ethel was. No one could work like her, or have prac-

tical foresight like hers; and no one could learn like Ethel. A mistake was to her a lesson and a stepping-stone, that was all. Ethel was now her real self, lively, loyal, energetic, brimful of clever ideas and generosity, and no one, Lucille felt, could deny her recognition any longer. And then Ethel spoke again.

"Alison has asked me to join her dancing-class next fall."

"Shall you?" asked Lucille, somehow not too much surprised at the news. She had been invited herself, some time ago, to join this really very nice little club when she was fifteen, which would be on the third of September. Ethel would be fifteen in October.

"Yes," answered Ethel, with pleasant enthusiasm, "I think it ought to be lots of fun. I'll have plenty to do, but I'd like to join it, because Alison seemed to want me, and I think we'll be good friends."

"She's gone to Hallett to-day, did you know it?" remarked Lucille, as the road still continued to be deserted by other young

promenaders. "Yes, with the whole gift committee; I saw them meet at her house, and start off together."

"Was Mary there? How did she look?"

"Oh, quite pleasant! I think she'll help see to it that the furniture is very nice. She's better at details than at organization!"

"It was a fine idea to use our sixty-four dollars and fifty cents to help buy equipment for the library, I think," declared Ethel. "Not a dissenting vote on that proposition, was there? Oh, look, Lucille! Actually, something is coming along this forsaken road!"

The something was a Ford car, and just as the two girls came abreast of the yellow-pillared schoolhouse, now closed up tight, a blue speck became visible in the car, then the speck became a whole uniform with gold trimmings, and Ben Porter appeared at the wheel, with Captain Jim beside him. As the car came abreast of the schoolhouse, Ben drew up, and both the occupants got out.

"So you're going swimming," commented

Ben, after greetings had been exchanged. "I wish I could,—visiting makes you lazy! I must report back to my ship to-morrow, though, and I leave to-night for New York."

He was a fine-looking young fellow, jolly and friendly, with a clever, earnest face. Every one who had seen something of him on his visit had liked him very much, and hoped for a better acquaintance with him; for, to tell the truth, Ben was a trifle shy. But his reserved manners were not unattractive, in fact, they gave promise of revealing an interesting personality on longer acquaintance. Lucille said hopefully: "Maybe you'll be coming back soon, though? Swimming will be even better next month."

"I think you'll see me back before the summer's over," returned Ben, pleasantly. "In fact, maybe more than once. You see, this will be my last trip on the good old *Algonquin*. I've been transferred to a faster vessel."

"Promoted, promoted!" rebuked Cap-

tain Jim. "Land sakes, Ben, you'd think it was a crime to be any good in your work, to listen to you!"

"Isn't that perfectly wonderful!" cried Ethel. "Congratulations! And if you're promoted, what do they call you now?"

"Chief radio operator," prompted the captain, before poor Ben could have possibly answered. "And his name'll be printed on the officers' list for all the passengers to see, and if the commander wants him to step to the bridge, he'll have to say 'Please' when he asks him!"

"Wow!" ejaculated the embarrassed Ben. "I'll be glad I'm going, Granddad, if you give all these secrets away ——"

"I can do a lot worse," Captain Jim began to threaten; but at that instant, to the surprise of the two girls, the schoolhouse door opened, and Miss Page came out.

She locked it behind her, and came along the path to the gate. She was prettily dressed in an afternoon frock of dark pleated silk, and a small overnight bag in

her hand indicated that she was off for a visit.

"I was just putting my desk in final order," she explained, as Ben took the bag and put it in the Ford. "I didn't get much chance at that desk during the last three or four weeks, girls! I'm off to visit my aunt in Hallett for a fortnight, and I'm to have a lift to the station, early, to check my trunk. Captain Jim, aren't you coming?"

"No, I'm bound down to the store, to get some new tackle for my boat," answered the captain. "But maybe I'll have company, too?"

"Yes, indeed, we'll go along," assented the two girls, as Ben climbed into the car, and Miss Page waved a gay farewell. "Good-bye, Miss Page! Have a good time!"

The trio of friends, one old and two young, swung on down the road toward the beach. And to the three of them, as they left the schoolhouse gate, came a swift momentary recollection of how they had,

just a few weeks ago, looked at Carleton from that very point, and seen it in the guise of a sleeping town. They glanced at one another involuntarily, and, seeing the same recollection written on each face, smiled, and then, glancing again over the town lying on the crescent-shaped shore of the blue harbor, laughed softly at the contrast.

For there was no shadow now over Carleton; all its silvery shingled roofs, on hillside and beach and beyond the dunes, reflected dazzlingly the afternoon sunshine. The busy dock, the harbor full of bustling small craft, the laborers far off on Battery Cape, were visible evidence that Carleton was a live place; even the temporary absence of many of the boys and girls now only showed that they were really away only on the task of bringing back, in some form, new life and resources to their home.

"Well, girls," observed Captain Jim, with a mischievous twinkle in his bright eye, "I reckon folks don't think I'm such an old story-teller now as they used to!"

"Why, what do you mean?" began Ethel; but Lucille broke in: "I know what the captain means, and I'm so glad he spoke about it! I have always wanted to know, Captain Jim, about that wireless message you showed us the day you met the four of us on the road with the silver plaque. Because, of course, you mean your prediction about your grandson coming back was absolutely true. Isn't that what you're talking about?"

"Why, partly," said the captain; but Lucille was satisfied to talk just about Ben for the present.

"I knew you'd tell us sometime about how he knew just the right time to come back. Do, Captain, please! You showed us the message; I know you're just dying to tell us all about it now!"

"Well," began Captain Jim, evidently quite pleased by Lucille's astute guess, "it was a sort of coincidence that Ben should come back just at the very time the town started to come back, when he couldn't pos-

sibly have known a thing about what folks were doing; and all excited over his coming as I was, that coincidence didn't escape me. Well, after he had come, and we got kind of calmed down, I says to him, 'Ben, how'd you happen to come right now?'

"'The Mason kid sent me a message,' says he.

"'*What?*' says I.

"'He must have busted up his tin bank to do it,' says Ben, 'but do it he did. Yes, sir. And you could have blown me overboard when that thing came rattling into my own ears on board the *Algonquin.*' And then, seeing I didn't believe him, he showed me the message as he'd put it down, and I'm going to show it to you two girls."

From his pocket he produced a slip of paper, and spread it open as his two astonished listeners halted to read it.

The sender of the message had grandly disregarded the saving of a single word, lest he should fail to make himself perfectly clear:

"This is to notify you that next week Carleton is coming back with a fine patriotic pageant by the school.

"ROBERT MASON."

"Did anybody in the world ever think of such things as Smarty!" gasped Ethel.

"Bob," corrected the captain.

"I mean, Bob! Just the same, the question stands."

"I said something like that myself, to Ben," admitted Ben's grandfather. "And he says, 'Probably not,' but this time, as usual, the kid thought of something good. He remembered Bob, you see, as a queer little tyke, but with a lot of brains. Bob, of course, was sure Ben would keep his word if he knew he could, and got a chance; so he told him he could, and gave him the chance. What's that you're looking at, Lucille?"

"The date of the message," answered Lucille, handing back the slip of paper. "It's the day we decided to clear up Battery Cape! Of course I knew it must have been before we found the plaque; the day

we did that was the same day you got the message saying your grandson was coming. I wonder how in the world Bob ever—I have it! He must have telegraphed this from Dad's office!"

"He did," grinned the captain; "of course your father approved. Did he tell you?"

"He never said a word about it! How do I know? Why, I remember Bob nearly told me all this, the day he went to Dad's office to get our Battery Cape announcement in the *News*. He was wild to telegraph somewhere about something, and I simply cut him short! He must have just believed our working together would get the right results!"

"Well, I believe he learned it from Lucille!" cried Ethel, fondly. "Lucille hadn't a thought in her head about finding the plaque when she decided that we must all work together for the town,—had you, Lucille?"

Lucille shook her head with a laugh. "I

didn't even feel it would do us any good if it came back, then!" she admitted. "But I can't think Bob learned much from me. It's possible I learned from him, in fact. For that day he beat the roll, and got chaos out of order by sounding a call that everybody obeyed together, he showed he understood what uniting people for some real purpose can do. And ever since, he's always been public-spirited, no matter how anybody laughed at him."

"They've quit!" cried the captain. "But don't think, Lucille, that you and he were the only two here who knew good must come out of working together. Remember that day Miss Page met us on the road, you two and Dick and Will and me?"

"And the plaque and the wireless message! Yes, Captain. And oh, she said that queer thing about having changed her mind three weeks before, to agree with you that your grandson would come back? I always did wonder what she meant!"

"She knew if you young folks would go

ahead together, the town would come back, and Ben with it! But I haven't finished my story, and the best part's coming," recollected Captain Jim. "Well, when I knew how Ben had come back, I asked him, 'Why didn't you write me last month?' And he says, 'I wanted to come home that bad that I couldn't write a line!' And the reason was the secret he was afraid I'd tell you a minute ago, with him here! On one of his recent trips the other radio man on the ship was taken sick; and after Ben had been doing night and day service for thirty hours, a call for help came from a sinking freighter, and the *Algonquin* went to the rescue, and finally patched up the freighter and got her into harbor, with Ben on duty four days with hardly any sleep. Of course he could make that up; but the point was, that if he'd made mistakes with the messages, as he could scarcely have helped, being so worn out, anything on earth might have happened. Well, he didn't make one. So he got his promotion.

"And then, girls, it struck him hard that he'd been mighty foolish, pledging his word when he mightn't want to keep it. For there was a special reason why he'd wanted to come home more than once, and particularly now, when he'd got ahead in the world. And I'm glad to say he had just about made up his mind to swallow his foolish pride, and come back anyhow, when what he calls his 'notification' came, and let him come home in state!"

"What was the special reason?" asked Lucille, much thrilled.

"You just saw her drive off in the Ford!" said the captain, smiling. "Yes, girls; Miss Page has put that desk in good order, for she won't put it in order no more. I sort of imagine she's making that long visit to Hallett to do some shopping, for I know, on one of Ben's coming visits toward the fall, the two of them will be married, and then she'll go to New York to live, where his ship comes in. Well, I'm as satisfied as they are, I guess; they've

been good friends so long there's no doubt they'll be happy."

"Oh, Captain Jim," cried Ethel, rapturously, "that is the most wonderful story you ever told us!"

"It's another of my true ones," laughed the captain. "Well, girls, so long! Here's the store, so I leave you."

On the two girls went together for a quarter of a mile, for the south beach, favored by the best swimmers in Carleton, lay that distance beyond the cape. After exchanging a few delighted comments on all Captain Jim's wonderful news, Ethel cried gayly, "And oh, he told the truth that day at the school-gate in a way he forgot to mention!"

"What was that?" asked Lucille.

"You, of all people, should remember! You asked him if he really thought we could do wonderful things and have great careers in Carleton; and he said, 'Why not?' Are you convinced now?"

"I am. I've been so busy lately carry-

ing on my wonderful career I've had no time even to worry about it! But, Ethel dear, it's time for me to tell the truth, now; so I tell you that it was you yourself who led me into having that career, and, I think, who will send me on to finer things yet."

"Please tell me how!" cried Ethel, wholly astonished.

"You made me go to the treasure-hunt. If I hadn't gone, I'd have missed the chance of learning the secret of finding treasure, or, perhaps, treasures—of all sorts! Surely," reasoned Lucille merrily, "the 'clues' must always be the same! Whatever you want to get, if you steer straight from the start, are open-minded, meet adversity cheerfully, and refuse to be stopped, you'll reach your goal, just as those bright verses led us, that one evening. And just as they brought me the precious key to the whole chest, as well as my own little special treasure, I think following them anywhere will bring you something more than you expect. Didn't we get a much better prize than even our dear sil-

ver plaque, when we all went forward together on Battery Cape?"

"What do you mean, dear Lucille?"

"Our golden treasure—happiness!"

"Surely! And there's only one way for that to be pure gold!"

Lucille looked at her friend inquiringly. Ethel's face crinkled with teasing laughter.

"You know what I mean as well as I do! Look yonder, there's the answer!"

Lucille looked intently at the charming scene now before her—the warm, bright sweep of golden sand of the south beach, the wide blue ocean tossed lightly by the crisp, free salt breeze, the dozen comrades already spending the glorious afternoon in the water, who, spying the two girls, were now calling out hearty greetings to them. Then she turned back to Ethel, still puzzled.

"Dear child," said Ethel, taking pity on her, "the only way for real happiness to exist is for everybody to be in the swim! Come along!"

THE END

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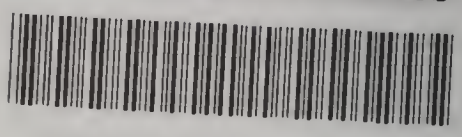

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